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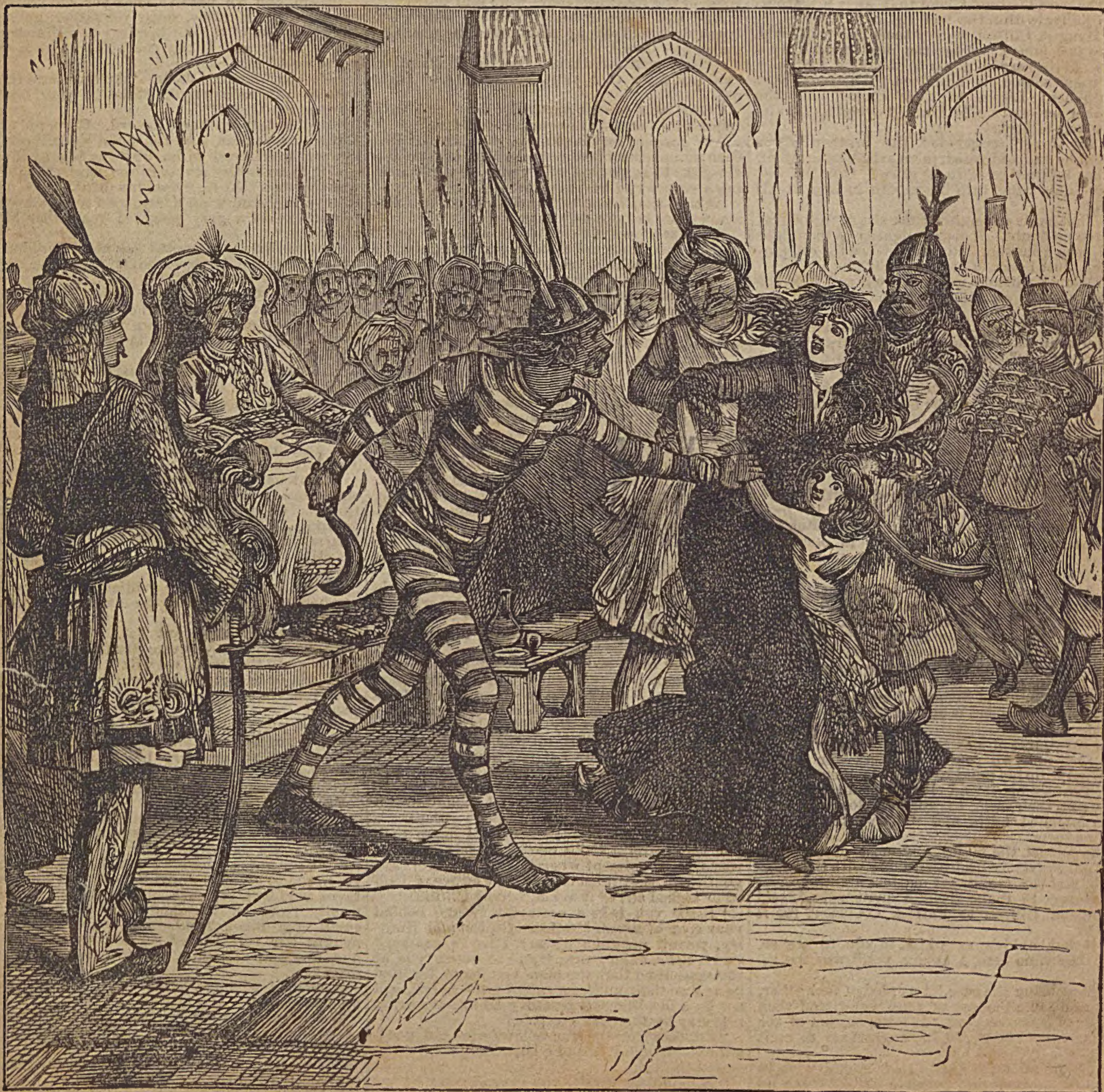
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THREE DASHING HUSSARS.



"Now," said the old king, "Tapo Ramee, cut off that woman's ears and lay them at my feet."

Three Dashing Hussars.

CHAPTER I.

A FRACAS AT MESS—THE ROUTE COME.

THE officers of the 12th Hussars, quartered at Brighton, are at mess.

That is to say, in the language of the uninitiated, they are in the act of dining.

Nearly a quarter of every officer's pay, in piping times of peace, goes to defray the expenses of this single diurnal meal.

If he marries, and prefers dining with his wife at home, he is bled to exactly the same extent, and on this account it is chiefly that none but the sons of wealthy men can afford to enter the British army.

They manage these things better in every other European army, but we won't enter into that vexed question; allow us, therefore, to recapitulate the fact that the officers of the gallant 12th Hussars are at mess; that the magnificent band of the regiment is playing sweetly without on the parade-ground, and that all is brightness and jollity within the well-lighted room.

"Hang it, Clifton, survey those two griffs who have just joined. What the devil next, I wonder? Is the service going to the dogs, that such as they should be admitted to consort with gentlemen? Listen to their lingo!" and the speaker screwed a gold-rimmed eye-glass into its accustomed socket.

"By Jove!" responded the brother officer whom he had addressed, in an aristocratic drawl, "what infernal cads, to be shaw! One has just clapped his knife into his mouth in lieu of his fork."

"That habit accounts for the size of the orifice, I have no doubt. It looks mightily as though he had been accustomed to use a sabre for the purpose. Just listen to his Irish, Clifton."

"Demme, Clifton, my boy, we'll call him the Cove of Cork, and the mess shall endorse the name."

"Right! So be it. But his companion is no better than he. A Highland catamaran."

A Scotch effusion after Burn. Just look at his fiery hair! Oh, what a shock!"

"Yes, one of those natural shocks that flesh is heir to, especially in the land of Burns; they mostly have red hair."

"He really should have gone into the infantry, for in our branch of the service we don't carry fire-locks upon our heads," and Cornet Clifton laughed at his own joke.

"Oh, stop that," remonstrated Huntley, languidly. "Your puns, Clifton, cease to be pungent, when we all know them so well. But it is disgusting to have such fellows in our crack corps. We must laugh and ridicule them out of it. We must, indeed."

"Ah, dreadful! The Cove of Cork is actually eating mustard with his roast mutton."

"And the Sulphur Stick is pouring horse-radish sauce over his. How ridiculous!"

"Howard of ours seems to be very thick with them, though. Now, I wonder why on earth that is?"

"To make fun of them, as I mean to do. Just wait until the desert is on, and I'll play 'em some pranks."

In the course of half an hour dessert was laid, and then the two practical jokers—for Clifton had made up his mind to enter as heartily into the fun as his friend Huntley—managed, by changing their seats, to range up close alongside their intended butts, and shortly after to open fire on them.

The colonel, the major, and most of the married officers had withdrawn along with the tablecloth, and thus facilitated matters amazingly.

"Happy to make your acquaintance," said Lieutenant Clifton to Patrick O'Corker, for it was he.

"Bedad, an' it's very kind of you to say so, sir. The same here, I assure yez," was the reply.

"That being the case, let us pledge each other, first of all in a bumper of pure water, and then in one of generous port. It is the custom of the regiment, and it would be ungracious to omit the ceremony," said Clifton.

"Be jabers, an' it's not I that would wish to set so ill an example," retorted Pat. "It's no great love for wather that I have; but since the

port is to come afther, faith an' I'll jist grin an' bear it."

"Very well," said Clifton, tipping a wink to his friend Huntley, who was bamboozling Sawnie McSulphur in exactly the same manner, the nature of the jest having been pre-arranged between them. "Here's your good health, and your friend's good health, and may you live long and die a general."

And Lieutenant Clifton nodded his head, plucked the geranium blossom out of his finger-glass, and raised the crystal globe that held fully a pint of cold spring water to his lips.

"The same to you, sir, an' may you live to be a field-marshal at the laste," responded Patrick; and raising his own finger-glass with both hands, he nodded to Clifton, and drained its contents to the very last drop, a proceeding closely imitated by Sawnie McSulphur.

Surprised were both when, upon replacing the empty glasses on their plates, they perceived that those of the toast proposers were still full.

And yet more astonished were they when laughter came from up and down the gleaming mahogany board.

"Hech, sir!" exclaimed Sawnie McSulphur; "an' is it fules that ye've bin thrying to make us?"

"Och! now for the port, any way, and we'll inquire into that aftherwards," said Pat.

And gasping for breath, for the draught had been an unaccustomed one, he held out the finger-glass to be refilled with generous wine, making a very wry face the while.

At this, the chorus of merriment broke forth again more boisterously than ever.

But Pat's hot Celtic blood was not proof against this, the more especially as no decanter seemed to be coming his way.

Pat raised his finger-glass and flung it at Lieutenant Clifton's head.

That worthy, happily for himself, perceived the hurtling missile in time to dodge it, but not in a dignified way.

The finger-glass grazed his curly head, and made a star on a plate-glass mirror in his rear.

"By George, sir," said he, with a faint attempt at a titter, as he contemplated his now choleric butt; "you are fortunate to possess the means to indulge in such expensive luxuries. It'll cost forty pounds to replace that mirror."

"Indade an' I've no doubt but that it's twice the value of yer head, an' be the tinderness ov it, it don't seem to be so thick either; not so wooden, as if I may be allowed the comparison, Mr. Clifton, or whatever yer name is."

This repartee turned the laugh against the practical joker; seeing which, the cautious and prudent Scot said to Huntley:

"If ye'll condiscind to come out in the barrack-yard, I'll try and make the diskivery whether the head of ye is hard enough to skin my knuckles aginst," and he glanced down at his brawny fists as he spoke.

Another burst of laughter greeted this speech and action, both of which annoyed Huntley.

"Demme, I don't fight with my fists like a butcher," quoth he. "Where the deuce have you been brought up, Mr. McSulphur?"

"On the battle-field, an' the line of march mostly; my mon; for I flatter meself I'm not a feather-bed soldier, like you."

"You're a cad, anyhow, and so I refuse to render you the satisfaction that I would immediately accord to a gentleman."

"Well said, Huntley; hang it, I agree with you there, and if snobs persist in forcing their way into a regiment wherein all the officers are gentlemen, they must expect to be either ridiculed or kicked out of it again," quoth Clifton.

"Since you take a cowardly refuge behind your coat of arms, Messieurs Clifton and Huntley, permit me take up my friend's quarrel," said a clear, calm voice; "and to assure you at the same time that the men you have insulted have won their military rank by the sword, and not by a few beggarly pounds paid into the army treasury by their ma's or pa's."

"Captain Howard, the fellows were not good-natured enough to stand a harmless joke," stammered Clifton.

"A malicious insult, you mean," retorted our hero, hotly. "Allow me to inform you that

soldiers who have won their commissions and bronzes for valor, in such a campaign as that of ours in the Crimea, will not stand being made laughing stocks of by young popinjays, who have never smelt powder, or seen the flash of hostile steel."

"Popinjays, Captain Howard! 'Pon honor, your language is the reverse of courtly," blustered Huntley.

"I have no wish to make it courtly, since, with very much less reason, you designated my friends and comrades-in-arms cads and snobs. You will at once apologize to them for your insolence, or answer for it to me."

A burst of applause followed the speech of our old friend Jack.

"Demmed if I'll apologise to two men who've risen from the ranks," growled Clifton, sullenly.

"Nor will I," added Huntley. "Hanged if the whole service doesn't seem to be going to the dogs."

"Hech, and ye needn't cock yer ain feather sae high, Mr. Huntley, since yer father got all his wealth oot of the old brewery at Edinburgh toon. Faith, and I ken the sight of ye now, right weel," said Sawnie.

"Oh—oh," laughed Jack. "Are you sure that you do not make any mistake in your man, Sawnie, my friend?"

"Deil a bit, Misther Howard. Sure, an' my father, honest man, kept the 'John Knox' hostelry, and was forced to have all his beer of him, owing to a rascally clause in the lease, though it was that bad that many wadna drink it. Why, that young man, whin a boy, used to ride round for orders on a grey pony. I remember him perfectly."

A roar of laughter greeted Sawnie McSulphur's exposure of the birth, breeding, and parentage of the dandy lieutenant.

"It seems, then, that there is only one of you after all, worthy of my lead or steel. Mr. Clifton, you will either apologize to my friends, or answer for them to me foot to foot and blade to blade."

"Halloo! what is this? Quarrels among my officers! A duel on the tapis? Come—come, I say, this will never do. Mr. Howard, may I inquire of you the meaning of this?"

It was the colonel of the regiment who spoke—a grey-mustached veteran of at least sixty years.

"Lieutenants Clifton and Huntley grossly insulted my two friends and companions-in-arms, Cornets O'Corker and McSulphur; thereafter refusing to give them satisfaction, I made the quarrel my own," retorted our hero, hotly, his right hand playing with his sword-hilt the while.

"I can only regard as gentlemen those who conduct themselves after the manner of gentlemen," said the colonel.

"Bravo, sir!" sang out Pat. "It does one's heart good to hear ye spake like that. We'll jest follow ye to the death, we will."

"Hech, or to victory, rather, for we're the lads who'll never say die," echoed Sawnie McSulphur.

"Well, my friends," responded Colonel Conway, "I am happy to tell you that we'll have a chance of death or glory before long; for the route has just come, and we are under orders for foreign service. We sail on Saturday."

"Whither?" was the cry.

Colonel Conway, in a voice loud and clear as a clarion blast, exclaimed, his eyes gleaming with a strange fire the while:

"We are going where we would most wish to go, my lads. We are India bound. Our mission there is to help to crush, annihilate—ay, sweep totally from off the face of God's beautiful earth, the black fiends who have mutinied against our rule, turned on their own officers, and tortured and slain white women and children."

A yell of wild and ferocious joy greeted this announcement.

But a wave of the colonel's hand at length once more restored silence, and then he continued:

"We lead the van of Lord Clyde's avenging army. We and the 42d Highlanders go out in the Himalaya. We, gentlemen, shall have the

of striking the first blow of Britain's chance. All who require leave to visit and farewell to their friends, must apply for it at once. Now, no more quarreling, on pain of my severe displeasure."

And so saying, Colonel Conway turned on his heel and abruptly quitted the room.

CHAPTER II.

PURCHASING A FRIENDSHIP AND LAYING UP A RESENTMENT.

SUCH was the excitement and the change of thought that the arrival of the route, and the knowledge of where they were bound and for what purpose, had introduced into the mess-room of the gallant 12th Hussars, that the dissension between Jack, Pat, and Sawnie on the one side, and Lieutenants Clifton and Huntley on the other, was quite forgotten.

The two lieutenants were by no means sorry to get out of the quarrel with Jack, and as they slunk out of the room one after the other, their hearts were full of gall and bitterness.

"Clifton," said Huntley, "I will have a deadly vengeance, if I wait for fifty years to obtain it."

"Pooh!" retorted Clifton, "I don't see what you have to be touchy about, since your father is only in trade himself."

"What! are you going to throw up that in my face, too? You, whose wrongs are equal to mine?"

"I don't know about that. What's good for the goose is good for the gander; but I don't consort with such vulgar poultry."

"Clifton, old fellow, you wanted me to back a bill for you this morning," whined Huntley.

"And you declined to do so, having a true trader's caution, I suppose," sneered Clifton.

"Speak not of it. I was out of sorts. What if I lend you five hundred without interest, in consideration of our friendship?"

"Egad, old fellow, do you mean it?"

"Of course I do, since you are the only man I care about in the regiment."

"Oh, I'm your friend for life on such liberal terms as those. But don't you want some sort of security?"

"Your mere note of hand, in case such a trifle should slip your memory, that is all," replied Huntley.

"D— it, you are a friend indeed. But couldn't you make it six hundred, old fellow?"

"Well, yes, if you particularly wish it. But mind, we are still warm friends, both privately and to the world as well."

"Assuredly, most assuredly. By Jove, who else would lend me six hundred on my own security?"

"No one, I expect; but mind, it's the brewer's money, and out of compliment to him the brewer must be sunk, and if that cad's assertion that my father was in trade gets any credence in the regiment, I look to you to deny it."

"Ay—ay, old fellow, I'll do it for six hundred very good reasons. When shall I touch coin, eh?"

"The day after to-morrow; and now your hand on the bargain, and farewell, for the matter necessitates rather a lengthy letter to the governor."

"But you are sure of being able to keep your promise to me?" said Clifton.

"As sure as I am of obtaining double that amount for my own immediate wants," was the calm rejoinder.

"Hang it, old fellow—my dear fellow, I should say—couldn't you in that case make the loan to me seven hundred?"

"My very dear fellow, no, I couldn't, and that's flat. It is written that the laborer is worthy of his hire, not that he should be overpaid."

"Oh, I daresay; I'll try and make the six hundred do. Ta-ta, and mind you pitch it strong to the governor."

And so saying, Clifton stuck his glass in his eye and sauntered away.

Huntley's brow lowered as he gazed after him, and when he had disappeared, he muttered to himself:

"Fool! If I do lend him six hundred pounds without interest, I'll have my money's worth. While he cleaves to me with his aristocratic name and pedigree, no others will venture to turn their backs. And I shall have him under my thumb, too, and be able to make him my tool. And I swear I'll bring to ruin, disgrace and death, that infernal Captain Howard and his

protéges, McSulpher and O'Corker; ay, if I hang for it!"

CHAPTER III.

TO THE WEST—A CONFIDENCE—PAT ON HIS BEAM ENDS—HAIDEE'S HEROIC RESOLVE.

MEANWHILE, Jack Howard had applied for leave, not only on his own account, but on that of his friends, Pat and Sawnie.

The leave for all three was graciously accorded by the colonel.

An hour later, the trio were proceeding westward as fast as the midnight mail could dash along.

Past Portsmouth and Salisbury and Exeter, and an hour later they heard the roar of the sea again.

"At last," cried Jack, "here we are in the Teignmouth tunnel. Look to your traps, comrades, for we'll draw up at the station almost directly, and there will be the end of our journey."

Five minutes of bustle and confusion ensued, and in double that space of time our three friends found themselves in a pair-horse fly and bowling merrily along through the streets of the pretty little town of Teignmouth.

"I hope yer honor's father won't think that we are intruding," said Patrick, at length.

"My father is always glad to see gallant soldiers, especially when they happen to be his son's friends."

"It isn't that I mind yer honor's father, for I know that he'll make allowance, but it's yer honor's lady, who doubtless spakes good English by this time and has perfected herself in the habits of good society," said Pat.

"Well, she certainly no longer patters Turkish, or disdains the use of a fork," replied Jack, "but for all that, she'll scarcely be able to detect any errors in your grammar or accent, so you needn't feel nervous on that score."

"Och, sure, sir, an' that's a comfort. But your sister, Miss Cora, who's a British lady bred an' born?"

A shade of annoyance crossed Jack's brow at the mention of his sister's name, and he made reply:

"Have I never told you that Cora married a year ago, much against her father's wish and my own, a Colonel Harrison, of the Company's service, and went out at once to India with him? Ah, I dare say I didn't, for the subject was a sore one. However, such was the case, and her husband is, I much fear, a swindler, though at the same time brave and deucedly good-looking."

"By George, I hope the fellow's regiment is stationed nowhere in the disturbed districts, or if it is, that his men are true, for if not, poor Cora may by now have been massacred like many another British lady. Why, Pat, what's the matter?"

"Och, nothing, yer honor," he gasped, confusedly. "But I'm grieved that Miss Cora has made a bad match of it, an' that she's amongst those blood thirsty niggers, the Sapoys. Be the blessed Saint Pathrick, if they hurts but a hair of her pretty head I'll take vengeance on a good score of them. I'll give no mercy or quarter to the fiends, not I."

"Do not let us anticipate that she is in peril," replied Jack. "Ah, here we are at my governor's place."

Jack had opened the carriage-door, sprung to the ground, and received the beautiful Haidee in his arms.

"Oh, this is indeed joyous," exclaimed she, in a voice as musical as that of a song-bird. "Won't your father be delighted?"

"Not so much as I am at seeing you looking so well and so beautiful, Haidee," replied Jack. "But our stay will be a short one, for the route has come, and we are off to India to fight the Pandis on Saturday."

"To India?" gasped Haidee, a sudden pallor chasing the roses from her cheeks. "To that land of blood and horror? Yet never mind, you go as avengers of the innocent, and in forty-eight hours I'll be quite ready to accompany you."

"Haidee—dearest Haidee, you must not think of accompanying us. Indeed you must not," said Jack.

"Yes, but I shall," persisted Haidee, with a stamp of her little foot. "A wife's place is by her husband's side in the hour of danger."

"We'll argue that point by-and-by, darling,"

was the reply; "but at present let us go in, for I see my father at the window."

CHAPTER IV.

NEXT DOOR TO RUIN—JACK'S BRIGHT IDEA—ILL NEWS FROM INDIA.

JACK found his father very much altered since the time, now nearly fifteen months ago, when they had all returned from the Crimea together, just after the fall of the Russian stronghold of Sebastopol.

Jack had little doubt but that he was now feeling the effects of his long incarceration in the Russian mine, and the many exposures and hardships they had experienced during their escape from Siberia.

Never before had he seen him so low and dispirited.

Directly the meal was over, the old man called his son into his study and unburdened his heart to him.

"Jack," said he, "the old Devonian Bank in which, as you are aware, I was a large shareholder, went smash a month ago. I have postponed telling you that we were beggars as long as I possibly could. 'Tis a terrible thing, a terrible thing."

"Never mind, father," said Jack, bravely endeavoring to hide his own astonishment and grief. "If your ready money is all gone, you have still your pay and the freehold of this pretty little villa and estate."

"Alas, my boy, would that matters were as comfortable as you imagine, but honor has forced me to satisfy every call made upon me. To accomplish this I have had to assign over half my pay for nine years, and furthermore to mortgage this place for every penny that I could obtain on it, which was three thousand pounds."

"Well, father," said Jack, as cheerily as he could, "you have deserved your honor by the sacrifices that you have made, and to a British officer that is everything. Who may your mortgagee be, eh?"

He felt no interest in the question, but he put it because he felt that he was called upon to say something.

"Why, Mitchelmore, my lawyer, obtained me the money of a Mr. Clifton, a very rich man, who has lately settled in these parts. He belongs to a good old family, I believe, and he has a son in some hussar regiment or other."

"By Jove, he is in mine," said Jack. "And I must say that a more insufferable puppy never—"

"We will sink the puppy for its sire's sake," said General Howard, interrupting him. "Mr. Clifton lent a thousand pounds on the security more than his legal adviser recommended him to do. What think you of that?"

"Why, that in this case the old proverb of 'Like father like son,' does not apply. But I'll try and do the amiable to the son for his sire's sake, or rather for my sire's sake, as you request me, sir. Meanwhile, in India during the sack of some temple or palace, perhaps I'll be fortunate enough to pick up enough loot to pay off the mortgage and free you from your embarrassments. Who knows? At all events, we will hope for the best, father."

"Ay—ay, my son. Look on the rosy side of life while you can. It is youth's glorious privilege so to do."

"And a soldier's at all ages, father. Do you know that Haidee insists on accompanying the regiment?"

"Let her, and I will get my sister, your aunt, to keep house in her place. She will be a better nurse and companion."

"What—than Haidee?" exclaimed Jack, aghast, really hurt by his father's manner; "better than Haidee?"

"Yes, of course. Your wife is a pretty little ornament enough, Jack, but she is very little more use than one. She always makes a mistake in the mixing of my grog, and at gruel and bandaging a gouty leg she is nowhere."

"Well, perhaps she might not shine in such accomplishments as those so well as Aunt Tabby," sighed Jack.

"Shine? Why, she is a child at them, and at a score of other household accomplishments as well. I shall miss her singing and taste in arranging bouquets, though. Nevertheless, take her with you, Jack, for I'm almost sure the little woman would fret herself to death did she fancy you were undergoing dangers and perils that she could not share."

"I'm quite sure that she would," said Jack. "By Jove, she shall go with me."

Father and son then quitted the library. The day wore rapidly away, and the dessert

after a six o'clock dinner brought with it the evening post.

Among the newspapers was one from India, which General Howard immediately tore open.

It was not long ere his gaze had caught a marked paragraph, which he eagerly perused.

It ran as follows:

"On the 8th of March, eighty-five troopers of the 3d native cavalry, sentenced to imprisonment with hard labor at Meerut for refusing to receive their cartridges, which they alleged to be greased with fat, while they were being marched off the parade, flung their boots in their comrades' faces, and bitterly reviled them for permitting their punishment.

"Two days later the entire regiment broke out into open mutiny, massacred such of their officers as did not escape in time, broke open the jail, liberated their comrades, burned the cantonments, and then marched off with band playing and colors flying in the direction of Delhi. It is feared that Colonel Harrison and his young wife were both murdered by the fanatics."

"Poor Cora," exclaimed the general, bursting into tears. "So she has fallen a victim to those wild beasts."

"Let us hope not," said Jack. "Though if she has, terribly and fearfully shall she be avenged, I swear it."

"Ay, that shall she be, by the infernal jingo!" added Pat O'Corker, in tones of concentrated passion.

"Heh, sirs, an' I'll lend a hand, an' a heavy one, to help in the righteous judgment," echoed Sawmie McSulphur.

Forty-eight hours later Jack, and his wife, and two leal friends were journeying back to Brighton by express.

CHAPTER V.

THE MARCH TO PORTSMOUTH—ABOARD THE TRANSPORT.

JACK HOWARD, dearly as he loved his sister Cora, had but little time to think of her or of her probable fate when once he was with his regiment again.

Haidee never faltered in her resolve.

Jack should not brave danger and peril alone, that she was determined.

Her life was all wrapped up in his, and she prayed that the same bullet or lance might lay them both low.

* * * * *

At last the eventful morn arrived, the trumpets shrilly sounded the "assembly," and immediately after "boot and saddle."

Very different looked the gallant hussars to what they would have done on a review day, for their tall heron plumes, and much of their holiday trappings had been laid aside, and both officers and men carried canvas haversacks and wooden canteens slung over their shoulders.

Their horses were all as black as jet, save those of the trumpeters, kettle-drummers, and the band, which were snow-white.

Scarcely were the men mounted, when Colonel Conway appeared on the scene, mounted on the fine black charger that he had captured from a Russian Cuirassier after his own had been shot under him at the battle of Balaklava.

He at once wheeled the regiment from line into close column in rear of the leading troop, the band then moved to the front, and at a signal struck up "Malbrook is off to the Wars," and as the first crash of the brass instruments burst forth the great gates were thrown open, and the colonel shouted out:

"March!"

Through the streets of Brighton in sections of three the gay cortege proceeded at a trot, the band suddenly changing the air to "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

Jack Howard, as captain, rode, of course, at the head of his company, and by his side pranced and caracoled his fair young wife, Haidee, mounted on a black palfrey.

"Howard is a fool to think of taking that fascinating little bit of goods out to India in the company of so many handsome and captivating young bachelors," said Lieutenant Huntley, with a sneer, to his friend and ally, Lieutenant Clifton.

"I think she is by far the greater fool to come," responded Clifton.

"Her being a fool don't detract from his being one also," laughed Huntley. "However, it is just as I would wish. I would not have had her stay behind for worlds."

"Why not? You have surely not fallen in love with a married woman?"

"Not especially so. No, Clifton, my boy, Mrs.

Howard won't make a fool of me, notwithstanding her bright eyes, but I intend to make one of her, and through her to break her husband's heart."

"I don't fancy you'll succeed. I believe her to be as good as she is pretty."

"And what matters it if she continues so, as long as she can be made to look black in the eyes of the world, and more especially in his. Was not Desdemona a very proper young woman, and yet Iago made her husband think otherwise. Now this Howard is a greater fool than Othello, and I'll be a precious deal sharper than Master Iago, or I'll give you leave to eat my head."

"It's a rascally plot," said Clifton, "and all for his manufacturing you a coat-of-arms."

"Well, joke for joke; 'tis fair play."

"But this fair, innocent young creature, Huntley; she has never injured you."

"Pooh! What of that? Are not husband and wife one? I strike his most vulnerable part through her, and do you think I am going to be cheated out of my vengeance? Why, McSulphur's revelation and his joke thereon will live as long as the regiment; I will cry quits with both through that girl wife somehow."

"Huntley, you've a devilish temper," said Clifton, who was not all bad—yet.

"Well, my lad, like it or not, you'll have to help me in my vengeance."

"I'll see you hanged first. What the deuce do you take me for?"

"My debtor," replied Huntley, with a look that there was no mistaking.

"Oh, I see it all now!" gasped Clifton. "Had I not satisfied the most pressing claims against me with half the amount, I'd force you to take back your loan."

"Ha—ha—ha! don't be ungrateful, old fellow. You know that but for it you'd be at this moment in a sponging-house or a prison, as your father, in spite of his wealth, had refused to encourage your extravagances any longer, and your creditors would never have allowed you to quit England had I not been your friend in need. Well, see that you help me now, that is all."

And Huntley fixed a meaning look on his companion's face.

Clifton cowered beneath his companion's gaze as he said:

"Are you threatening me, Huntley?"

"Not a bit of it, comrade. The man who has his victim down hard under his thumb, has no need to threaten. Your silence and assistance were essential to me, and I bought them; that was all. You are not going to get out of the bargain, I can tell you. Pooh, man, there is more gold where that came from, and I know that your pleasures are dear to you. Why be so squeamish, then. I never knew you to be troubled with a conscience before."

"Nor am I now, that I am aware of," laughed Clifton. "Well, be it as you say. Needs must when the devil drives, I suppose. I've ruined a precious lot of pretty women for my own pleasure, so I really do not see why I should not add just one more to the list to oblige a friend; more especially, too, when that friend shows his gratitude in so open and generous a way."

"Spoken like the thorough brick and good fellow that you are. Your hand upon it," exclaimed Huntley, and hands were really shaken on that unholy compact.

Of course all the foregoing passed in a very low tone of voice indeed, as the two conspirators against Jack and Haidee's nuptial happiness rode side by side on the flank of their company.

Little did they suspect that there was one sharp-eared fellow in the ranks who had caught a portion of their infamous conversation, and who was even now turning the disconnected fragments over in his head, and trying hard what he could make of them.

Alas! he had not heard sufficient to make anything without a further clew.

Meanwhile Brighton had been left far behind, and as the day progressed Shoreham, Ford, Arundel, and Chichester were successively ridden through.

At the latter city the regiment halted for a couple of hours for the men to dine and to bait the horses, after which the march was resumed, and long ere sunset Portsmouth was gained, and presently both troopers and horses were being conveyed by batches aboard the big troopship.

As soon as this was accomplished she spread her snow-white sails, got up steam, and by the clear light of a full moon ran down the narrow

strait, and ere midnight was plunging, bow der, off the Needles.

CHAPTER VI.

ABOARD THE TRANSPORT—THE CONSPIRATORS AT WORK.

EVEN aboard the *Himalaya*, there was much work to be done before matters could be got at all ship-shape.

The horses had to be stabled below in the hold, the men told off to their messes and watches, the swords and holster-pistols stowed away in racks, the valises and hammocks slung to their cleats, and so forth.

So that Haidee for some hours had her cabin to herself, and when her husband did return, he brought Sawmie and Patrick with him "to crack a bottle of wine," as he expressed it, "to a quick passage and a safe arrival at Calcutta."

Haidee was very tired and exhausted, but she received her old friends with one of her frank, sunny smiles, and according to her usual custom extending to each a hand.

The cabin was a very spacious one—the best in the ship, in fact, and so there was plenty of room for all four around the bright mahogany table.

And a good talk they had over old times and old adventures the reader may be sure, and when all the old battles had been figuratively fought over afresh, conversation turned to the perils that in all human probability would shortly be in store for them on the torrid and blood-soddened Indian soil.

"In which treacherous country I shall allow you, dear Haidee, to proceed no further than Calcutta," said Jack, resolutely, between the whiffs of his cheroot.

"Now, Jack," laughed the fair girl in reply, "I might as well have stopped at home altogether as go no further than that peaceful capital. On the contrary I have resolved that whatever dangers you brave I will brave, and whatever hardships you undergo I will undergo. I am almost as old a campaigner as yourself, please to recollect, and have taken part in more fighting, probably, than any trooper in the regiment, with the exception of the colonel and the party here assembled."

* * * * *

It is none of our business to describe all the incidents of the voyage out, for our readers are doubtless as anxious as ourselves to let slip the gallant 12th, like greyhounds from the leash, at the ferocious and treacherous black demons who had eaten our bread and been pampered by us for years, only to turn on and rend us in the end, and cruelly torture our innocent women and children.

Besides, all voyages are more or less monotonous, more especially one aboard a troopship, where all is rigid routine from morning to sunset.

The Hussars were all in white canvas frocks, which didn't give them a very heroic or soldierly appearance, and they were divided into three watches, only one of which was allowed to be on deck at a time.

Then all day long there were nine hundred beds airing, triced in netting along the bulwarks, and once a week there was a grand wash, and thereafter every rope not likely to be hauled at for the next few hours was converted into a clothes-line, so that for half a day the big transport looked like a big laundry ground, and anything but a romantic object.

There were guards and sentries here, there, and everywhere, at all hours of the day and night, and there was hard work in the stables down in the hold, where the horses were as carefully groomed and cared for as on shore, their hoofs and fetlocks being washed twice a day in clean salt water, their eyes and nostrils sponged, and their mangers scrubbed with vinegar and water, while their day meals were of bran mixed with corn, and their suppers bran mashes dashed with niter.

As for land, none was seen from England all the way to the Cape, save a fleeting glance of those beautiful but malarious islands around the Cape de Verde.

Table Bay was entered, and the Hussars had begun to look for the "Flying Dutchman," many tales of which spectral craft they had been humbugged with by the sailors.

Lieutenants Clifton and Huntley had made peace with Jack Howard, and began to pay court to his pretty wife.

Jack, as our readers are doubtless aware, was one of the most generous, unsuspecting and open-hearted fellows in the world, while Haidee

new naught of etiquette or prudery, and was a true child of nature.

"The little fool will easily fall into any snare," Huntley would sometimes mutter to himself.

Jack would often frown when he saw his little wife speaking so freely and laughing so gaily with these men, who were both young and good-looking fellows, with a host of small talk just suited to Haidee's comprehension.

He had a great horror of being thought jealous.

But jealousy is a stubborn passion, and given to have its own way, reason with it as you will; and Jack soon found that instead of mastering the green-eyed monster, it was rapidly mastering him.

Soon, too, he was to be given some plausible excuse for the feeling.

One evening, when Jack was returning to the quarter-deck, after having seen the horses littered down for the night, he met Huntley just quitting it, and regarding intently and with apparent rapture something that he held in his open palm.

So unconscious did he seem to be of Jack's approach that he kissed the object thrice after our hero's gaze was upon him, and then looking at Jack, uttered a cry of surprise, and dropped to the deck a gleaming tress of black hair bound with a small piece of blue ribbon.

Jack had just time to notice that the hair was the color of his wife's, the piece of ribbon of her favorite azure blue, and tied in the shape of a true lover's knot, when Huntley had picked it up with an air of the most painful confusion, and thrust it into the breast-pocket of his coat and hurried away.

Jack mounted the steps on to the quarter-deck, and joined Haidee with a frowning brow.

"Why, Haidee," said he, "you have pink ribbon in your hair. I thought your favorite color was blue. Where is the pretty piece that you wore yesterday?"

"Oh, I don't know. Somewhere in my cabin, I suppose. Don't you like this?"

"Decidedly not. I abhor pink. Do go and don the other one at once, Haidee."

She thought his words harsh, and his manner peculiar, but instantly obeyed him.

In a few minutes she returned with her hair done up in blue ribbon.

But Jack's jealous eyes immediately detected some tiny rosebuds on it.

"The ribbon that you wore yesterday was plain, and this is flowered," said he.

"Dear me, what does that matter? I've lost the bit that I wore yesterday."

"Are you sure, Haidee, that it is not still around your hair?" said Jack, pointedly.

"Of course I am. Do you see it there?" demanded Haidee, with petulance.

"I think I have seen it there," said our hero, bitterly, and walked away.

And while Haidee rushed to her cabin to cry over her husband's harsh tones and changed manner, and to wonder at its cause, Huntley joined his friend Clifton in their little cabin, and plucking forth the lock of hair, waved and danced it before his eyes, laughing heartily the while.

"The plot begins to work," said he. "You should have seen how he looked at me. He is as sure in his mind that it's his wife's hair as I am that it's Chili Rao's, the Lascar cook. I've to thank the puff of wind that blew the ribbon out of her cabin on to the deck, though, I suspect, for some of my success, and I must own that you tied the true lover's knot in the most masterly style, Clifton."

"Huntley, you are a fiend," said Clifton, with just a shade of remorse.

"Right, old fellow, and you are only the devil's imp," was the mocking retort.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONSPIRATORS SCORE "JACK AND THE GAME"—AN OPEN RUPTURE.

THE game open by Messrs Huntley and Clifton in the preceding chapter, was not allowed to flag.

Meanwhile, Haidee was fast getting the character of being a married coquette.

She had done no harm, and thought no harm, but one's dear friends and acquaintances will always do the latter for one, and Jack, with his sighs, and fidgettings, and black looks, himself helped the scandal against his fair young wife to increase and flourish.

"Bedad, an' if I was his honor I'd spoil the two spalpeens' good looks for a month an' more," growled Pat one day to Sawnie McSulphur, as they watched the three. "There's that fellow

Clifton a reading poethry to her, while the other holds her crochety cotton for her to wind. Down on his knees, too, like the idiot that he is. I wish the ship would lurch and send him into the lee scuppers."

"Hech, an' it wadna signify owre muckle if 'twas to send 'em baith overboard. They are like two beastly slimy slugs settled on a beautiful moss rose. First they spoil its beauty, and then they devour it. How can his honor be sae blind?"

"He isn't blind, Sawnie, old friend. His eyes are only too widely opened," said a sad and desponding voice, and looking around, their gaze rested on our hero.

He looked pale and miserable, and their hearts fairly bled for him.

"Faith, yer honor, an' if you think it beneath yer dignity to take the starch out of thim, and to punish their impudence, jest lave it to Sawnie an' I. We'll pick a quarrel wid thim on any trifling matther that crops up, and they sha'n't be fit to show their faces in a lady's presence agin for the rest of the voyage," said Pat.

"No—no, don't quarrel with them on my account," retorted Jack, bitterly. "If she prefers their society to mine, let her have it, in Heaven's name."

"Hoot away, man, that such a black thought should enter yer head," said Sawnie. "The lassie prefers nae sich thing. Can't ye see that they buzz around her like bees around a flower, and that she hasna the power to drive them off?"

"She don't seem to object to the buzzing, though, for see how she smiles on them," replied Jack, with a sigh. "No—no; much I fear that she married me before she knew her own mind. And both these fellows are more agreeable and better-looking than I am."

The Lord forgive ye, Master Jack, for yer evil thoughts and the lies ye are telling. Sure an' the purty lass is as true to ye as the needle to the pole. I'd bet a thousand pounds, if I had it, agin a penny piece, that she wouldn't kiss one of them on the sly for the queen's gowld and diamond crown."

"Hech, mon, and sae wad I," retorted Sawnie; "but he don't hear ye, he's gone."

It was true enough, for Jack had walked away, while Pat was speaking.

* * * * *

That evening when they had retired to their cabin for the night, Jack's jealousy got the better of him, and he had his first open rupture with his wife.

"You are very dismal, or else sulky this evening, Haidee," said he.

"I wasn't aware of it, Jack; but really I was thinking the same thing of you."

"It seems to me that of late you keep all your smiles for others."

"If so, Jack, that is because you have never claimed them yourself."

"Come—come, madame, I am not to be played with. How can I be to you as of yore, disgusted as I am with your free and easy conduct towards those wretched dandies, Huntley and Clifton?"

The cork was out of the bottle now with a vengeance, and Jack's long-confined wrath was being poured freely forth.

"Dear me, Jack, you have never told me that I have been acting wrongly."

"I told you, indeed? Your own heart should have informed you on that point."

"It has not, and furthermore, it is conscious that I have done no real wrong."

"It must be a right curious heart, then, for you have disgraced me before everyone in the ship. So much so that I wish to God you did not bear my name."

These last were cruel words, but then jealousy is only a form of madness.

In the present case they had the effect of stirring up the fierce, Oriental fire that slumbered deep down in the lovely Turkish girl's impulsive nature.

"Heaven knows I have no desire to bear your name longer than you yourself wish it, Mr. Howard. So please to remember henceforth that I am the daughter of a Turkish pasha, and furthermore, a princess; and if you reject me as a wife, kindly pay that respect unto my rank to which I am entitled."

As she spoke these stinging words, Haidee drew herself up to her full height, and with flashing eyes and queenly mien, seemed to claim from him fealty and obedience.

"So great a personage requires a cabin all to herself," said Jack, with a bow worthy of a Raleigh or a Crichton; "I will beg her to consider me the humblest of her slaves; and since she desires to reign o'er many hearts, e'en be it so."

And he backed out of the cabin.

Poor, proud, silly young creatures. The soft answer that turneth away wrath had been spoken by neither.

Such are the inconsistencies of human nature. And Haidee, [knowing that she had done no harm, and that Jack had misjudged her, was fairly put upon her mettle, and instead of altering her manner towards Lieutenants Huntley and Clifton, for the first time actually encouraged their attentions, all innocent of their evil intentions.

Pat and Sawnie at last could be restrained no longer, so to rouse the ire of the two lieutenants, had recourse to various taunts directed at Huntley anent beer and brewing, and when the barm of his indignation rose, Clifton's anger had to rise too.

Taunts, therefore, soon led to blows, and after a round or two, both Huntley and Clifton's faces were made non-presentable to ladies' gaze, while their opponents had received hardly a scratch.

With great joy they told Jack what they had done.

"Thank you, old fellows, but it was hardly worth the trouble," said he; "for in another week we shall be at Calcutta, and I hope immediately ordered up country. I shall not allow Haidee to accompany us, that I have resolved, or she will be risking her life in Huntley or Clifton's behalf, should they happen to put themselves in any danger."

"May the Almighty forgie ye for such a speech as that," said Sawnie, bluntly; "had any ither officer or man in the regiment uttered such a thing, I'd a-struck him dead where he stood, ay, if it had been the grey-haired colonel his ain sel."

"Well, I trust to Heaven I do misjudge her," said Jack; "yet nevertheless the quicker a Sepoy bullet finds my heart, the better will it be for all concerned."

CHAPTER VIII.

INDIA AT LAST—JACK'S AWFUL INTELLIGENCE AND TERRIBLE OATH.

JACK and Haidee never came to a proper understanding throughout the remainder of the voyage; the wife was proud, and the husband was stubborn.

And now at last the cry of "Land ho!" is shouted from the masthead, and an hour later, the big transport has entered the river Hooghly, the Thames of India.

It is still a hundred miles to Calcutta.

The sun had but newly risen when first the coast line was sighted.

Another hour and the banks of the stream converge to within a mile of the ship on either side.

A hideous jungle, the abode of millions of serpents and wild beasts.

Poor Haidee shudders as she gazes at the uninviting shore, and Jack is not by her side to comfort her, though Lieutenant Huntley is.

How she inwardly hates him and his companion, as the cause of her rupture with her husband, even though her pride and stubbornness force her to smile and laugh with them.

On, still on, bounds the gallant vessel, and at length the jungle gives place to patches of cultivated land.

Innumerable shrubs are in gay blossom, and giant creepers clamber up and fall in festoons of flowers from the very topmost branches of the forest trees.

And yet this beautiful scene has its horrors, for what are these black, bloated objects that come floating and bobbing down, borne on the seaward current?

Haidee, attracted by the swarm of vultures that flutters over each, discovers to her horror and with a shriek that they are dead bodies.

They are in fact dead Hindoos, who have been launched upon the sacred waters of the Ganges, and after a journey of perhaps a thousand miles, are now drifting seaward.

But the bodies were a mass of corruption, and withal a terrible sight to gaze upon, so that Haidee, the instant that she distinguished what they were, sickened, reeled, and would have fallen to the deck had she not been caught in the arms of the watchful Lieutenant Huntley.

Now, as ill luck would have it, at that very moment Jack, whose conscience had just begun to accuse him of harsh conduct towards his young wife, was making his way aft to speak a kindly word to her ere they reached their journey's end.

Catching sight of her, however, apparently in the very embrace of Huntley, and to all ap-

pearances voluntarily so, he deemed her disgrace at last complete, and with a curse leveled at him and her, turned around again and busied himself with his duties.

"At all events he shall never call her his," he muttered to himself; "for when once she is left behind in Calcutta, he nor Clifton will ever see her again, since I will challenge to single combat and kill both."

But now, at last, the outskirts of the city are within view.

Then another turn in the stream and they are all among the shipping.

No sooner is the anchor down than the ship is surrounded by boats filled with natives, some clamoring for employment, and others offering baskets made of palm leaves, and filled with luscious fruits.

More eagerly still are they received.

"How go matters up country?"

"Are our people still holding their own?"

"Are the rebels making any headway?"

"Have there been any more massacres?"

So are they interrogated.

Alas! the replies that they have to give are far from being of a pleasing nature.

"The native troops have revolted at Neemuch. Only the day before the blackguards had taken a solemn oath on the water of the Ganges to remain faithful to us. Yet nine hours after they had murdered twelve officers, nine women, and seventeen children; burnt the cantonments, and marched for Delhi," said one, with a fierce oath.

"Twenty-three ladies and children with five wounded officers who had taken refuge in the fort of Shamsi were barbarously slaughtered there on the 13th," quoth another.

"The King of Delhi has slain every European whom he can lay hands on. Some of our women he has even crucified in mockery of our faith. He has thirty thousand mutineers around him, and his fakirs are preaching a crusade of extermination against the British," said a third.

"Even Nana Sahib has turned against us," exclaimed another. "He has hoisted the old Marhatta standard, declared himself peishwa, and is besieging Sir Hugh Wheeler in his cantonments."

"But whenever we've met the cursed women-killers in the open field, we've trounced them well, no matter what their numbers were," swore another. "Fifteen hundred of our fellows sent nine thousand of them to the right-about at Ghazee-ood-deen-Nugga."

"Can you tell me if Colonel Harrison, of the 31 Native Cavalry, and his wife, have really been killed by the mutineers?" asked Jack.

"Why, yes; that's an old matter now," replied the party to whom he had put the question. "The colonel had his legs, his arms, and lastly, his head chopped off; and his wife—a deucedly pretty girl, she was the belle of the Calcutta balls three months previously—was stripped, and hunted into a jungle which was known to swarm with wild beasts. The fiends kept guard around it lest she should break through and escape, when the roaring of a tiger and her shrieks of agony told them that she had fallen its victim."

"God of Heaven bear me witness!" exclaimed Jack, in choking tones, as he gathered these particulars of poor Cora's fate, "that for every hair on my darling sister's head, I will have a Sepoy's life! Good-by to all other resentments until this great expiation is made. I will strike, hew, and spare not, I will shut my heart to pity and mercy until there is not a Sepoy or Sowar left me to kill."

And having thus delivered himself of his terrible oath, Jack tottered, reeled, and fell on the deck in a dead swoon.

CHAPTER IX.

A DANGEROUS DUTY—AN INFAMOUS LETTER—DEATH WOOD AS A FRIEND.

It took up all the remainder of the day disembarking the men and horses, and marching them to the long row of brick barracks.

But no sooner had the 12th Hussars installed themselves therein, than the order was received from the Governor-General of India, Lord Canning, that after nine hours' rest they should be marched northward to Bancoorah, to overawe three native regiments who were expected to revolt and massacre all the Europeans in the place.

"We are in a deuce of a fix, and no mistake," said the *aide-de-camp* who had brought the route to Colonel Conway; "thirty-four out of our seventy-five native regiments have revolted, and we aren't sure that a single one of the rest is to be depended on. And God only knows

whether another month may not see us all driven into the sea."

"Pooh!" retorted Colonel Conway, with a deep and bitter malediction. "We aren't going to be driven there by a set of niggers, if they outnumber us by a thousand to one. Wait until my boys get among them. Egad, the murdering rascals shall feel the strength of arm that the roast beef of England gives. We are as eager as bulldogs to be at their throats, I tell you."

* * * * *

Ten minutes after this interview, Jack Howard was summoned to his chief's presence.

"Mr. Howard," said Colonel Conway, "you and your two friends exchanged from the 17th Lancers into the 12th Hussars because it was the first regiment on the poster for foreign service. For that reason it's very evident that you want to see as much fighting as you can. Well, and so you shall. I'm well acquainted with all your gallant doings in the Crimea, and I look to you to repeat them here. You are the only three officers in the corps, besides myself, who have smelt powder or reconnoitred in an enemy's country. I put faith in you, therefore, and now beg you at the head of your own troop to start an hour before dawn and push boldly, yet cautiously, forward on the Bardwan road to make requisitions of food and fodder for the regiment, and to keep a sharp lookout for an ambushed foe."

"Very well, sir," said Jack; "you may depend on the work being well done."

"Should you find yourself face to face with say ten times your number of the foe, you will remember that prudence is the better part of valor, and fall back on your supports. Smaller odds than what I have mentioned, I leave you to account for."

"And we will do it, colonel," replied our hero, with flashing eyes; "and be assured that the hardest work the women and child killers will give, will be the resharping of our sabers after we have blunted them against their vile carcasses."

"Well spoken. Your brave words give promise of braver deeds. Now, about your pretty girl-wife. The governor-general has issued a general order that not a single European lady is to be permitted to accompany husband, father, or brother up country, so I cannot sanction her presence with the regiment on any excuse whatever."

"My desire is that she remains in Calcutta," replied Jack, his brow clouding for the first time.

And then to change the disagreeable subject, he quickly continued:

"My friends carry the colors; will it not be rash to trust them with so slender a guard?"

"We shall leave our standards in Calcutta. I will not unfurl them against so ignoble a foe. We give such dogs the lash, that is all."

"Would that the whip was one of rattlesnakes, then!" responded our hero, fiercely.

"Keep your sabers as sharp as the rattlesnake's teeth, and they will answer the same purpose. Now do you need any further instructions?"

"Where are we to await the regiment's coming up? That is all I want to know now."

"Three miles this side of Bardwan, but hold yourself in communication with it by patrols all the way, and be sure you do not get cut off with your slender force by the foe."

"I will use the greatest caution, sir," said Jack, and, saluting, he withdrew.

"So before the moon breaks I may be in action, and have struck the first blow that is to avenge Cora," he muttered to himself, as he strode through the echoing corridors towards his quarters.

"Or," he added, more sadly, "I may be numbered with the slain, by some Sepoy bullet fired from out an ambush on the line of march. Well, I must bid poor Haidee farewell, for we may never meet again, and she did love me once."

He was making his way towards Haidee's quarters, when it suddenly struck him that duty required him first to give orders to his men; and so he bent his steps towards the little nine foot square chamber which Pat and Sawnie shared in common.

They were both snoozing very comfortably when he entered.

When, however, Jack had contrived to make them understand the work that the colonel had cut out for them, they became as lively as two eels, and spang out of bed to execute an Irish jig and a Highland fling respectively.

"We'll attend to all, yer honor," quoth Pat. "You just toddle off and make it up with the mistress, sor."

"She is not to accompany us, the governor-general forbids it," said Jack.

"An' a good thing, too. It would ha' been a fearful shame to have put such a pratty young thing in danger of being killed by a lot of dirty niggers. Yet, nevertheless, make all auld grievances up with her, and give her the kiss ov peace, for ye may niver live to see her again," replied Sawnie.

"She has a brave champion in you, at all events, old friend," answered our hero; "and by George! I am half inclined to believe you, even though appearances are against her."

Jack hurried towards his wife's quarters, but scarcely had he gained the passage which led to them when a smiling Hindoo stopped him, and held out to him a letter.

"Sahib Huntley, dis from lily lubly white Missie Howard; bellee sweet lady, she give poor Poll Sing rupee to gib you dis. You come no furdur, not now, at least. By'n-by."

All Jack's jealous suspicions were aroused afresh at this incident.

"Give me the letter, fool, and don't stand there like an idiot," said he.

And snatching the three-cornered perfumed billet out of the hand of the syce, he tore it open.

It didn't take very long to read, for it was both short and pithy, and ran as follows:

"DEAREST HUNTLEY:—Love needn't be so unreserved as to give rise to scandal, so do not let your feelings again get the better of your reason, as they did aboard ship this afternoon. Seek me not until you gain a greater command over your emotions. We can not be more than acquaintances before the world, no matter how in secret our hearts throb for each other. Oh, that I had only met you before him; but as it is, we must be prudent and cautious."

"Yours, in heart, though not—alas!—in name, "HAIDEE."

When Jack had read this infamous missive, the joint concoction of Huntley and Clifton, through, he crumpled it up in his palm with much fierceness and then glared with so tiger-like a look of rage that the ever-smiling Hindoo turned and fled in dismay.

When he had gone, Jack's rage was still so great that he had half a mind to go in and kill the woman who he conceived had treated him so infamously.

A moment later he felt that he couldn't hurt her, however.

No; that was impossible.

But he would never see her more.

He would never look upon her false face again.

He would neither bid nor send her an adieu, but he would avenge his sister Cora's massacre.

CHAPTER X.

THE NANA'S PROCLAMATION—IS THE GUIDE HONEST?

THE streets of Calcutta were deserted and silent enough when Jack Howard and his troop of cavalry turned out of the barrack-yard.

They had a native guide, believed to be trustworthy, since he had been in the company's service for years; yet the orders were to keep a close watch on his movements, and saber him on the first well-grounded suspicion that he was playing them false.

Directly Pat and Sawnie had heard Jack's shout of "Threes right—left wheel—forward!" as the troops debouched from the barrack-yard, they, who knew him so well, could tell by the fierce, ringing sharpness of his voice that he had not made up the quarrel with his pretty young wife.

"The de'il himself is poking his finger in the fire," growled Sawnie to his comrade, then. "There's an ill influence in the matter somewhere. She was more free-and-easy wi' those graceless loons, I own, than was right."

"There's devil's blackness and treachery, it's my suspicion," responded Pat, in the same low tone. "If there have been any lies acted or told against the colleen, and I, Patrick O'Corker, come across the author of 'em, I'll slice his tongue off at the roots, I will!"

"But not until it's owned to all the foul slanders it's given voice to, Pat, for that would be a fule's game," said Sawnie. "Nae—nae, we'll make him confess all on his bended knees first."

They continued to converse on this topic for some time longer, for Jack did not court their companionship, but rode sullenly and silently beside the guide at the head of the troop.

And now gradually the princely and palatial part of Calcutta was left behind.

On his journey Jack had noticed huge posters stuck up here and there; but, unacquainted with Indian ways and customs, had taken little notice of them, until at length a name gleamed forth from the foot of one that immediately riveted his interest.

Nana Sahib, Rajah of Bithoor.

"What?" Jack asked himself; "has that bloodthirsty Mahratta chief dared to post his manifestoes in the very streets of the capital of India, and within a mile of the marble palace of the governor-general? This looks evil indeed, for not even the native population of the metropolis are faithful to us."

And even in Calcutta they outnumbered the Europeans by at least a hundred to one.

Jack was a fair Hindostanee scholar, and he halted his troop to read it through.

The guide would have prevented this if he could.

Jack was not to be deterred, however, and he read the proclamation right through.

It ran as follows:

"Dated at our Palace of Bithoor, on the festival of Ramah and of Siva.

"The time has come when the yellow-faced and narrow-minded robbers of our soil are to be driven out of India and into the sea on every hand.

"We have borne with them until the measure of their iniquity and ingratitude to us was full; but when they began to meddle with our faith we would no more of them.

"The English fools sought to tamper with the religion of the Hindoo and Mohammedan soldiery by greasing the cartridges of the former with the fat of the sacred bulls of Brahma, and the latter with that of hogs, imagining in their hearts that Heaven thus lost, the native warriors would serve them for the good things of this life that they were ready to offer them in abundance.

"But the children of India have arisen in their might, and numberless as the sands of the desert have determined to drive the treacherous stranger from their soil, and furthermore to water it with the blood of their women and of their children.

"The good work goes bravely forward; all the English must be killed; the rallying places are Delhi, Lucknow and Cawnpore. Let all hasten to one of these centers.

"NANA SAHIB,

"Rajah of Bithoor."

"Tear that lying placard down," said Jack Howard to his men. "Ride back also, half a dozen of you, and tear down all those that we have already passed; then overtake the column on the spur. Down—down with all, I say. Leave not one remaining."

It never struck Jack that their guide comprehended English, for whenever he had hitherto addressed him in that language the fellow had shaken his head.

Had he noticed the curl on his lip and the triumphant and vindictive flashing of his eyes as he betrayed his anxiety about the Nana's proclamations being all destroyed?

Jack's force moved slowly forward, the better to enable those who had ridden to the rear on special duty again to catch it up.

They were not long in doing so, and then came to light another ominous incident, for while tearing down the last proclamation they had been fired at from the window of a house on the opposite side of the way, and one of the hussars had been wounded.

"'Tis plain that the conflagration is quite ready to burst forth even here," said Jack, in a low tone, to Pat and Sawnie, who had just ridden up, one on either side of him. "I wonder if we shall be able to hold India? I wonder if a single one of our race will be lucky enough to quit it alive?"

"Of course they will, an' have thrashed these niggers out of their skins within a couple of months," replied brave Patrick O'Corker.

Then, approaching his lips close to Jack's ear, he added, in a whisper:

"Arrah, an' don't be desponding, yer honor, at all events aloud, because that smutty black-guard is dhrinking it all in like potheen, an' growing fat on it, too. He understands the spache ov us well enough."

"Do you think so? By George, I will very soon prove that," said Jack.

He edged his horse over alongside the Hindoo guide's as he concluded, and rather ostentatiously undid his holster flap.

Then he said to him in a quiet tone and manner:

"I find that you speak English fluently, that you are furthermore a spy in the pay of the enemy, and treating you as a traitor, I'm going to shoot you through the head."

He gazed hard at the Hindoo as he uttered the threat, but the man's face did not betray the slightest sign of emotion or fear.

He looked puzzled for a moment, and then shook his head with a laugh, uttering the words "Nur kurrin" (I don't understand.)

"I hope now you're satisfied," said our hero, turning again to Pat and Sawnie. "Had he understood my threat he would have clapped spurs to his horse and been off like a shot, you may be sure."

Pat and Sawnie were both of the same opinion, for they considered it impossible that any man could have helped showing some emotion under the influence of so sudden and so terrible a threat.

The Black Tom was at length ridden through, and the open country beyond gained, and this greatly to the relief both of their eyes and noses.

So the English hussars rode gaily enough forward, laughing and chatting as they went—for that matter poor Jack's was the only desolate heart among the number.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MARCH NORTHWARD AND HOW IT WAS INTERRUPTED.

By dawn the little troop of hussars were twenty miles north of Calcutta.

They had skirted on the route two or three native villages, but not a sign either of human or animal life had they seen or heard, save now and then the howling of wild beasts in the jungle.

Jack knew his regiment was moving out of Calcutta in the van of the Sutherland Highlanders, the Connaught Rangers, and the Welsh Fusiliers, with a couple of batteries of flying artillery to bring up the rear.

And as he recollected this, he could not help thinking—"And what may not occur at Calcutta when nearly all the European troops have left? What may not happen, especially to Haidee?"

Embued with these thoughts, he surveyed with his field-glass the opposite shore.

Suddenly he thought that he saw the gleam of arms among the thick bushes that flourished along the margin of the stream, trailing their lower boughs in the water.

He looked again, and though he could not be sure, his suspicions were strangely aroused.

It would never do, he knew, to leave an ambush of the enemy there, so close on the flank of the on-marching British columns which would be defiling past in a few hours.

But, then, would he be authorized in risking the lives of his men?

"I will cross over and make the discovery myself," thought Jack. "Pat or Sawnie can lead the troop as well as I can, and my death will mean promotion to a friend, freedom to Haidee, and peace to myself."

"Pat," said he, with a sad smile, "as custodian of the royal colors you hold precedence in military rank of Sawnie, and if I fall will, in virtue thereof, take command of the troop. I tell you this because I'm going to swim my charger across to the opposite shore and see what's among those bushes. I've a suspicion that they grow bayonets and sabers."

"Sure, an' if that be so it's I will go in yer place, Master Jack," quoth O'Corker.

"Hech, sirs, an' Ialang, on the princepal that two heads are better than ane," said Sawnie.

"No—no, Sawnie," said our hero; "that motto don't apply in all cases. It's better for one head to have a bullet in it than two, especially when white heads and hands are so scarce."

"Bedad, yer honor, then as one good captain is worth more than a couple of cornets, Sandy an' I had better take the risk anyway," rejoined Pat.

"Not so," said Jack; "as your superior officer, I command you not to follow me. Farewell!"

And so saying, our hero spurred his horse forward, and with a plunge it leaped from the steep bank into deep water, and struck boldly out for the opposite shore.

"Be the blessed Saint Patrick, I hope his honor's mistaken, an' that those ugly black bushes are full ov emptiness, for if not we've seen the last of him," groaned Pat.

"Hech, an' that's jest what he wants us to do. The laddie seeks to throw his brave life awa' be-

cause he fancies that his pratty wife is false to him."

"Och, an' it's married life that hasn't improved Master Jack. An' such a pretty colleen, too, as he has. Be the saints, an' I could stand a dozen ov the like."

"Look, Pat," cried Sawnie, "as I live, those bushes are full ov armed men! I can see the glin' of steel meeself there, noo."

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when there was a puff of smoke, a flash of flame, and then a deep and sonorous boom.

A six-pounder ball, evidently aimed at Jack, hummed hurtling through the air with such precision that he had to duck his head to avoid it.

The ball came whizzing through the entire troop, happily doing no damage, since they were in open order, and finally plunged harmlessly into a small field a good quarter of a mile in the rear.

Jack was half stunned by the concussion of air caused by the passing ball, for a second or two; but then looking up he saw the muzzles of six field pieces grinning out of the sassafras bushes at him, and a clump of dusky faces in their rear.

The lion blood of the Howards warmed in every vein at the sight.

He knew how galling and deadly would be the fire of this masked battery opened unexpectedly upon an army defiling along the opposite shore, and he resolved to take it.

Jack waved his sword above his head and yelled out:

"Those guns must be ours. Follow me, lads!"

It was certain that none but British cavalry would have had the pluck to have done so.

But though the regiment was composed of little more than boys, for the three years' war just over against the Russians had pretty well decimated our army of its veterans, not a single hussar in Jack's troop but first of all yelled with enthusiasm and then headed his horse for the stream.

Pat and Sawnie of course led the way, feeling that now they had come to hard knocks with the foe all their troubles were over, and "divarshen" was just about commencing again.

No sooner were they in the water than the entire battery opened upon them with a roar.

Cannon balls whistled over and between their heads, and ploughed up the water on all sides of them.

Did everything, in fact, but bowl them out of their saddles.

The fact was, the Sepoy infantry were not very well versed in artillery practice, and they were furthermore appalled by the desperate courage of their foes.

That a single troop of horse should swim a river to attack and take a powerful battery, firing point blank at them from the opposite shore, and manned by double their number of armed men, was a deed of "daring do" that they could by no means understand or sympathize with.

They loaded and discharged their pieces as fast as ever they could, it is true, but they were too much astonished and terrified to aim accurately, and thus it was that so many of their balls went diving for fishes instead of preparing food for them.

So that the hussars began to laugh aloud at their clumsy gunnery.

CHAPTER XII.

A HOT SKIRMISH—A WINGED THIEF—THE TREACHEROUS GUIDE.

THEY had commenced to laugh before they were exactly out of the wood, however.

For when they were within fifty yards of the shore, the Sepoys exchanged their big guns for their muskets, and with them contrived to make much better practice.

It was a baptism of fire, indeed, that the dashing hussars had now to undergo.

The shrieks and groans of the stricken men, and the hoarse roars of the wounded horses, ascended to the azure Heavens, from which the sun seemed to be gleaming down in bitter mockery.

"On—on!" yelled Jack; "it will be our turn soon to deal death to these rascals. Remember the women and the children."

Those words acted like a talisman.

No more heed was taken of the bullets that continued to buzz around their heads like bees; nor of the ledge of gleaming bayonets that the next minute sought to prevent their landing.

For what could successfully oppose the avengers of youth, beauty and innocence?

The God of battles was with them, and the

legions of the prince of darkness was not allowed to prevail against them.

'Twas a wondrous sight to see the black horses bounding up the bank, and the blades of all their British riders at work, while the hussar dolmans floated loosely over the bridle arms, a superb defense against a saber slash, though of late years most foolishly discarded.

The Sepoys, strong and confident in their numbers and position, showed no signs of panic or cowardice until the British cavalry were right among them.

And the palest and hardest smiter among them all was Jack Howard, whose blows and thrusts never once needed repetition.

At every slash of his bloody saber a Sepoy head was sliced down like a melon, or a Sepoy arm shred right off at the shoulder.

"The devil—the devil!" the Pandies soon began to yell out, as he, more than all the others, arrested their awe-struck attention, and then all at once they were seized with a wild panic and yelled for mercy.

"Yes, the mercy that you gave to our women and our little ones," was the reply that they met with, and the work of slaughter still went on.

In vain the wretched Pandies turned and sought safety in flight.

How could they escape from the onward bounding black horses, themselves almost as fierce now as their riders.

The only difference was that they were stricken down from behind, and fell as cowards fall.

Nearly a hundred Sepoys lay dead amidst the coarse, long grass.

There were no wounded, there were no prisoners; none to tend or guard; they were all dead.

"These guns are British," said Jack. "The D battery of the Royal Artillery, as I live. See, it is marked on the side of the carriages. Let me see; yes, I am right. The D battery was stationed at Jumrood where the 3d Native Cavalry and the 5th Native Infantry revolted, so that it was there where Cora was stripped and hunted into the jungle to be devoured by tigers. Perhaps we have already avenged her on some of her murderers."

And he glared with a frown over the dead bodies.

"Heaven grant it," said Pat, fervently.

And he spurned one of them with his foot as he spoke.

But their own wounded had to be attended to.

He called a halt, therefore, and contented himself with sending a single messenger southwards to apprise Colonel Conway of what had happened.

At this instant up dashed one of the hussars who had been sent forward by Jack to reconnoiter, his charger a lather of white foam, with the intelligence that a whole regiment of sowars were only a mile in his rear, and making straight for the camp at a gallop.

"Brought down upon us, too, by that rascally guide of ours," continued the trooper, "for he sped past me like a shot ere I was more than a couple of miles away."

"Confound the villanous spy and my own stupidity both!" exclaimed Jack. "I declare that the fellow had slipped out of my memory altogether. This is serious news, my friends!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A SCORE OF MEN OPPOSED TO A REGIMENT— BLOWING SOWARS FROM THE GUNS.

It was serious indeed, and even the devil-mecare Pat could look upon it in no other light, for it was evident that they could not retreat with their wounded across the river, and to escape themselves, leaving them there to be butchered, was not to be thought of.

Yet they were now reduced to twenty-five fighting men, and the vidette who had ridden in had declared that the sowars were close upon a thousand, and would be up with them in ten minutes more at the most.

In fact, looking northward, already they could see the cloud of dust raised up by the hoofstrokes or their galloping horses, with spear-heads and turbans gleaming through its wreaths.

On they came, nearer and nearer, until at last their scarlet coats and dusky faces could be seen.

Above their turbans waved British colors, and in bitter mockery their trumpets and kettle-drums now began to blare and thunder forth "Rule Britannia," while the troopers, brandishing their swords aloft, gave vent to a British cheer—a genuine hip—hip, hurrah, though pitched in a shriller key, and resembling more

the shriek of the hyena than the lordly roar of the lion.

"We little thought a year or two ago, Pat, when we were fighting the Russians, that we should ever see the dear red-coats and Union Jack arrayed against us," said Jack Howard. "Yet never mind. The ass when arrayed in the skin of the lion is still the same pitiful animal as he was before, so that perhaps, helped by our six guns, we'll be able to keep those fellows at bay until our comrades come up, for they can't be more than five or six miles to the south of us now."

"Arrah, yer honor, then we're as safe as the days are long," replied Pat O'Corker.

"To the guns, then, lads!" roared Jack.

His men answered him with a cheer, and hastened to obey his orders.

On came the sowars, brandishing their long and tasseled lances.

And that breeze, increasing in strength, now for the first time blew out the white, silken, heavy, bullion-fringed regimental standard, revealing in its center a huge 3d above the capital letters B. N. C. for Bombay Native Cavalry.

"Ah!" exclaimed Jack, with a savage joy, "here come the rascals who hunted my sister into the jaws of the tiger. Woe be to all!"

On they came in all the pomp of their splendor, superb horsemen, as all Orientals are, and full of glee at beholding how small a handful of foes they had to crush.

To Jack's disgust, about two hundred yards from the guns they opened their ranks, and advanced in open order.

He had quite forgotten that these "niggers," as he mentally designated them, were perfect in our drill, and in European cavalry tactics, with officers to command them as experienced as our own.

Our great mistake was ever having a double set of officers, native as well as British, to our Indian regiments, since on the troopers revolting against the latter, their corps were still perfect in all respects, and ready to take the field.

"Fire!" shouted Jack, when he thought that they had come sufficiently near.

Four of the field-pieces belched forth flame simultaneously, and happily the iron messengers of death did not go humming harmlessly down the long lanes between the ranks of the onward-sweeping horsemen, but each hit the head of a column, knocking over half-a-dozen men and horses, one behind the other, and creating great terror and consternation.

"Stop your vents—slew round your guns—reload!" yelled Jack, in a voice that rang clear as a bell above the shrieks of the wounded, the groans of the dying, and the curses of the survivors.

If these had had the courage to come right on, instead of reining short up and calling on the name of the prophet (for they were Moslems to a man) they would the next minute have been trampling poor Jack Howard and the rest of his heroic little band under the iron hoofs of their horses.

But they were panic-stricken at the fate of their comrades, and by the time that they had got back their courage the hussars were ready for them again.

The sowars this time tried to wheel around on their flank and cut in between their rear and the river; but the muzzles of the guns followed their movements everywhere, and presently they caught another dose of cold iron that was every bit as drastic as the first.

They came on twice more, but with less of spirit and determination each time.

A single troop of British horse would have captured the battery at a rush, but the eight or nine hundred Indian sowars hadn't the requisite go and dash in them, each trooper seeming to be more anxious to give precedence to his comrade than of greatly coveting the post of honor and danger for himself; and so, when they had made four charges and been beaten off each time, they broke and fled, their officers being among the first to set the cowardly example.

"Give the curs another dose!" yelled Jack, almost mad now with excitement, and it was given them with hearty good will, several being dropped by the fire, and the survivors hurrying their pace incontinently to get out of range of the deadly missiles.

"Hech, sirs, an' India's nae lost yet if all the mutineers are made of that mettle," said Sawnie.

"Be Jabers! an' now I see they're sich cowards I don't wonder at their being so cruel, since they say that a cruel heart and a craven one generally go together," echoed Pat.

"They are the villains who hunted my sister

to her death, and I will not spare one," said Jack. "See that the wounded be brought hither and lashed to the muzzles of the guns. I will have them blown to fragments, for I've heard that is the death they dread most of all."

Let not our readers think that Jack was cruel in issuing such a mandate.

They knew that he was generous and kind-hearted by nature, but he loved his gentle and lovely sister Cora, and he knew that these sowars had treated her as only fiends could have done.

Very few wounded were to be found.

Some three or four, however, were discovered, with wild, evil-looking faces.

"Reload the guns, and lash them to the muzzles, then I will speak to them," said he, fiercely.

Patrick O'Corker superintended this operation with particular zest.

Soon all was ready, and the fact was duly reported to our hero, who knit his brows and walked slowly up and down in front of the doomed men.

Then he suddenly faced them, and said, in tones of concentrated fury:

"I am the brother of the fair English girl, the wife of your colonel, whom you hunted into the jaws of the tiger. I believe your prophet preaches the doctrine of blood for blood, so you cannot complain of your fate. It is a merciful one, indeed, compared with that into which you doomed one who hated no living thing. I have no more to say, except that vengeance has found you out, and that I thank Allah that he has made me the instrument of your punishment."

"Fire!"

The last word was addressed to the gunners, who stood ready, lighted match in hand.

These were immediately applied to the vents of the cannon.

There was a dull roar.

A thick rain of blood, and the tragedy was over.

When the smoke cleared away the four sowars were found to be blown into indistinguishable fragments.

Hardly was this act of stern, retributive justice accomplished, when a hearty cheer in their rear caused those who had taken part therein to look around, and delighted were they at beholding the main body of their regiment gazing across at them from the opposite bank of the stream.

Then the colonel ordered the whole regiment to cross over.

The passage was effected without a single casualty, and when Colonel Conway heard Jack's report, he clapped him on the shoulder, and said, in his hearty manner:

"Well done, my boy. I see that the old 12th will have many a reason to be proud of you."

CHAPTER XIV.

BAD NEWS OF HAIDEE, WORSE FROM HOME, AND WORST FROM THE FRONT.

COLONEL CONWAY resolved on pursuing the discomfited Indians up sharply with three troops of horse, and with the rest of his force to encamp on the spot where Jack had obtained his victory.

The three troops of horse, with the enemy close before them, felt, however, equal to anything.

Two were under command of Captains Russell and Fraser respectively, and the third of Lieutenant Huntley.

"Your gallant feat of this morning will half fill a dispatch, and obtain a snug corner in history as well," said Colonel Conway, coming up for a second time to speak to Jack.

"Cornets O'Corker and McSulphur, you have seconded your leader well and nobly," he continued. "And as for you, my brave fellows," (this time addressing the hussars who had taken part in the struggle), "I am right proud of being your colonel."

"By the by, Howard, there is a letter for you from England. Ha! that reminds me, too, that we left your poor little wife in violent hysterics. She would have it that you had left without bidding her farewell. However, she's in good care, for Lady Bulstrode insisted on taking her home with her, and she's a capital nurse—an aunt of Huntley, of ours."

"I didn't think that Huntley had a ladyship among his connections," sneered Jack.

"I believe she owed the title to her good looks, since she married a Sir Charles Bulstrode. I will now go and have a word with the wounded."

And away stalked the colonel.

"And this Lady Bulstrode is her nephew's dupe and tool," muttered Jack. "Her calling on Haidee and taking her away is all a vile conspiracy."

Jack tore open the letter that the colonel had placed in his hand.

His brow grew dark as he read the following:

"You recollect my telling you, my son, how I had mortgaged the house and estate, as as to lessen the amount of suffering caused to so many thousands through the failure of the Devonian Bank. Well, no sooner does the mortgage money become due than that old swindler, Clifton, instead of renewing as he had promised me he would do, forecloses, so that now I suppose I shall be driven out of my boyhood's home in my old age. I think I told you once to be polite and attentive to his son. I now beg of you, should he prove to be as great a rascal as his father, to kick him on the slightest provocation."

"Hang it, these Cliftons and Huntleys seem destined to be our family's bane," growled Jack. A giggling close by caused Jack to look around.

The sound came from Clifton, lying on the broad of his back, reading a letter.

"From his father, recounting his victory over my father," muttered Jack to himself, "and the fellow is chuckling over the matter."

He could have kicked him had his attention not been suddenly attracted by the arrival of a horseman, attired in a ragged and tattered uniform, who fell out of his saddle from sheer fatigue the instant he got into camp, and then forthwith went off into a swoon.

His grey horse was little more than a loose skinned of bones, and the rider was assuredly in no better plight.

Many a pull at a brandy flask it took to bring him back to reason.

"Where do you come from, and what news do you bring us?" were the first questions asked of him then.

"Alas, I am from Cawnpore," replied the poor fellow freely, "and I fear that I am the sole survivor of all the British there. The Nana pretended to be touched by our heroic defense, and to feel for the hardships endured by our ladies and children."

"And the wretch deceived!" exclaimed more than a score of voices.

"No, he kept his word to the letter," was the answer of the exhausted man. "His own soldiery guarded us to the boats, and kept back the howling, hooting Sepoy rabble. All our hearts beat high with hope as we began to move down the river. But suddenly a terrible voice shrieked out from the bank:

"I have kept my faith with you British. I swore that I would see you embarked; that was all. Now you must protect yourselves as best you can!"

"It was the Nana who spoke, and directly he had finished the boatmen drew the plugs out of the bottoms of the boats, and, ere they could be prevented, sprang overboard with them. The boats immediately began to fill.

"And, to add to the horror of the scene, a masked battery at this instant opened upon us from the shore, and men, women and children were literally cut in pieces by the rushing grape and canister. Were I to live for a thousand years I could never forget the awful scene."

"The fiend in human shape—the treacherous Indian serpent!" exclaimed Colonel Conway.

CHAPTER XV.

HUNTLEY INVALIDED, AND PAT WITH A TASTE FOR MILLINERY.

It is impossible to describe the sensation that the news, of which this poor wounded and half-starved soldier was the bearer, excited in the breasts of the chivalrous and gallant hussars.

Had their colonel given the word, they would have been ready at once to have marched on to Cawnpore, and unsupported either by infantry or artillery, to have stricken the blow of vengeance against the Nana.

And while the terrible excitement was still at its height, back into camp rode the three troops of horse who had pursued the Bengal cavalry.

The sabers of the men were all bloody, and themselves sprinkled from heron plume to boot with the same crimson rain.

There was the look of demon-like joy and gratification in all their faces, as they sprang from off their smoking horses and proceeded to unharness them and rub them down.

A cavalryman's first care is his horse; himself he regards as a secondary personage.

Lieutenant Huntley's troop was the last to ride

in, and the lieutenant himself, pale as death, had to be lifted out of his saddle and placed on the ground.

It was Jack Howard, Sawnie, and Pat, who first perceived his condition and rendered this service.

"Halloo, Huntley," exclaimed Colonel Conway, coming up while the regimental surgeon was examining his wound, a severe sword-cut across the left fore-arm that had laid bare the bone, and whose excessive bleeding had no doubt induced the faintness; "you've caught it rather hot. But never mind, a good tight bandaging will reunite the parts in a week, and then you'll be able to take your vengeance out of the Pandies."

"I—I fear you regard matters too lightly, colonel," replied Huntley, wincing under the doctor's hands. "I really shall have to apply for leave of absence, I think; to be invalided back to Calcutta. Why, I sha'n't be able to hold a rein for a month."

"What do you say about that, Ferguson?" asked the colonel of the surgeon, rather brusquely.

"Not the slightest—eh, what am I saying? Why, yes. I don't see that Mr. Huntley will be of any use as a fighting man, or even as a leader of fighting men, for a good month or six weeks, you know. Inflammation might set in, and lead to mortification unless the limb be given entire rest—so that I should really recommend a return to Calcutta in a dhooley, unless you desire to lose a very promising young officer."

"Ugh! I suppose it must be so, though well I remember receiving just such a wound myself once in the old Sikh war, and its not keeping me out of my saddle for four and twenty hours. However, doctors, of course, know best. Your leave is granted, Mr. Huntley, but I trust you'll rejoin us the first moment you can safely do so, as you can be very ill-spared."

"You may depend on my doing that, colonel," was the faint reply of the wounded man.

"And where do you intend to fix your quarters at Calcutta, old fellow?" lisped Clifton, who now supported his friend's head. "Not in the regimental hospital, I hope?"

"No; I've an aunt—a widow who will be pleased to show me hospitality. Lady Bulstrode has a villa in the Maidoon," answered Huntley, in a very much stronger voice than he seemed to possess when addressing the colonel.

"Rascal!" muttered Jack Howard, and he strode away, closely followed by Pat and Sawnie McSulphur.

"Just as I expected it would be," he growled to himself. "I don't suppose he intended the getting of quite so severe a wound, but that has only hastened matters. And in a dozen hours he and Haidee will be under the same roof. Well, I must trust her, for naught but death shall cause me to lay down my sword till Cora is avenged."

Pat O'Corker, who was near Jack, seeing a piece of newspaper fluttering about, picked it up to read it, and though 'twas but a fragment, he soon managed to interest himself therein.

This was the paragraph that excited his wonderment the most, and that though it had neither beginning nor ending, both top and bottom having been torn off.

"—it is unmistakably the most wonderful idol in British India. Notwithstanding its hideousness of aspect, its eyes are huge diamonds of the purest water, and the lolling-out tongue is an immense ruby."

"The value of these three precious stones is so enormous that they would almost pay the National debt of Great Britain, and yet the doors of the temple which contains this god are never closed, night or day, and there is no record of any attempt ever having been made to steal the priceless jewels from its hideous head. Should our avenging soldiers succeed in penetrating into that part of the city where the temple of Rajgurrh Ahor stands, and discover these—"

And here the paragraph, much to Pat's chagrin and annoyance, abruptly terminated.

"Be the blessed Saint Patrick, an' what a treasure!" he gasped, as he tore the piece of newspaper up into the tiniest of fragments, and watched them go floating away on the breeze.

"What on earth are you muttering about, Pat?" inquired Jack, at this juncture.

"Faith, Master Jack, an' I was thinking what I'd do whin I became a milliner."

"A milliner, Pat? Why, what do you understand about ladies' caps and bonnets?"

"Och, be done wid your chaff now. I don't mean that kind of a milliner, but the other sort that gets more money than they can spend if they worked at it all day."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DOINGS OF THE AVENGING ARMY, AND HAIDEE'S DOINGS AT CALCUTTA.

NEVER before had the British soldiers encountered and overcome such fearful odds as were now in every direction opposed to them in India.

A dozen to one, a score to one, ay, a hundred to one, it was all the same to them.

At them they went, and in every case overcame them, too.

It was as though God's curse had fallen on the woman and child-slayers.

For how otherwise can we account for the victories of hundreds over opposing tens of thousands, and those tens of thousands not a mere rabble, but disciplined soldiers trained in and conversant with our own drill and tactics?

The quelling of the Indian mutiny does not leave the record of one officer or man among our forces who did his work badly, or proved himself a coward before the foe.

And no matter how wearied or broken down with fatigue and wounds they were, it needed but the whisper of: "Remember the women and children!" to cause our soldiers to leap from the ground with fresh vigor and fresh strength to combat their satanic enemy.

On the 17th of August, General Havelock's army entered Cawnpore, to witness a deed of blood, without parallel in history, which the miscreant, Nana Sahib, had just committed there.

One hundred and sixty-three ladies, who from time to time had fallen into his hands, and been imprisoned under a strong guard in the Cawnpore Assembly Rooms, he had on the approach of the British ordered to be barbarously murdered, and only too well did his bloodthirsty myrmidons carry out the arch-fiend's commands.

The little children had been stripped, and then cut to pieces before their mother's faces, they being cruelly reserved until the last.

Then the young girls were led out to suffer in the public streets; there stripped nude, beaten with knotted cords, and lastly thrown alive, but dying, into a deep, dry well, and the dead bodies of the women and the children hurled down atop of them.

The courtyard in front of the assembly rooms was full of puddles of blood that surged out from under the doors, when the 12th Hussars, as the van of Havelock's avenging host, entered the accursed city.

An account of the horrors that had been perpetrated there was soon wrung by menaces and threats from some mutineers who had been caught still lurking about the place, and these even pointed out the fatal well to our troops.

Strong men sickened at that awful sight, but only for a moment, when all their fury and indignation were let loose, and to work they went to avenge their countrywomen, and Britain's lovely innocent maidens and children.

The 12th Hussars left very little in the way for the rest of the army to do when it came up.

They smote at every accursed black living thing that day that they could come within sword's length of, and when they rode out of the city to welcome in their comrades and tell them what they had seen and done, they were greeted with the name of The Bloodsodden.

* * * * *

While Jack, Pat, Sawnie and the rest of the gallant 12th are thus meting out a stern retributive vengeance to the mutineers, let us see what Haidee is doing at Calcutta.

She had indeed, poor girl, suffered an agony of grief at Jack's leaving without bidding her even a farewell, and she felt as though her heart would break.

A witness of her distress, Major Rossiter, the oldest officer in the regiment, had called on Lady Bulstrode, and besought her as the only female acquaintance whom he possessed in Calcutta, to call on and try to comfort and befriend the poor deserted young wife.

This the lady in question had at once done; and being an impulsive, kind-hearted woman, had at last succeeded in soothing Haidee's grief.

Luckily for Haidee she was strong-minded as well as kind, and thus she at once combated the young wife's resolve to obtain a horse and rejoin her husband at any and all hazards, by telling her that it could not and must not be attempted.

So Haidee was at last persuaded to stay as contentedly as she could where she was.

She could pray for her husband's safety and shed many a tear at his absence, that was all.

The arrival at the villa of Lieutenant Huntley, wounded in the very first day's campaign, added to her distress by increasing her fears on Jack's behalf.

One day she happened accidentally to come

across a *Times of India*, in which was the following:

"The position of our army before Delhi is most critical. Our entire force is six thousand men, while of mutineers within the walls, there are a hundred thousand. The 12th Hussars have been the chief sufferers in the actions, since in each instance, when put to the right about by the infantry, they have pursued the discomfited foe up to the very walls of Delhi. In these actions they have lost fifteen officers, and three hundred and sixty men. Captain Howard, and Cornets O'Corker and McSulphur of the same regiment, are prisoners within the city, and the greatest fears are entertained of their being massacred by the mutineers."

Haidee's cheek paled, her lip quivered, and her heart throbbed, but the fire of a firm resolve flashed into her eyes, and she murmured to herself:

"Nothing shall keep me from his side longer; I will not rest in safety another night, while he is in suffering and peril. No—no, my proper place is at his side, and I will gain it, even if he and his two noble friends are lying in one of the deepest and the darkest of the King of Delhi's dungeons, ay, or even if they are standing in the place of execution, on the point of being butchered."

A future chapter will show how the brave girl carried out her resolve, but we must now return to the fortunes of Jack, Pat, and Sawnie.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SIEGE OF DELHI AND THE KING'S THREAT—VOLUNTEERING FOR DESPERATE SERVICE.

Two months have passed away since the hot June morning, when the gallant 12th had their first brush with the mutineers, capturing their guns, and defeating their crack cavalry.

We have already described briefly how Cawnpore was avenged, and the infamous Nana Sahib—his army cut to pieces, and his capital razed almost to the ground—a fugitive, with a reward more than equal to his weight in gold offered for his capture, either dead or alive.

The siege of Delhi was carried on under the most overwhelming difficulties.

Not an hour was wasted in doubt and indecision, not a measure was taken but what had been suggested by the most vigilant care and forethought.

So that when at last Sir John Lawrence was able to bring up his siege train, the batteries for its reception had been already erected, and it remained only to put the guns into position, and to open fire on the city.

For a week we battered at the great thick walls.

Then came a message from the old King of Delhi attached to an arrow, and fired close to the feet of one of our out-pickets, to the effect that if we did not at once stop our fire, and within three days leave his city in peace, that he would crucify a hundred and fifty Englishwomen, and hack, torture, and burn ninety-five white children, whom he had reserved in his prisons, for an occasion like the present.

It may easily be imagined what a sensation this threat created in the British camp.

A council of war was held.

"Is there anyone here present who would have the pluck to enter Delhi, and tell this savage descendant of the Moguls to his face that on his treatment of our women and children depends his own and his two sons' lives?"

Everyone was silent.

But all in an instant a young hussar officer, with a death-pale face, and a light as of insanity in his eyes, burst into the tent and exclaimed:

"I accept the task!"

"And I." "And I," exclaimed two more Hussars, rushing in after him.

The volunteers, it is almost needless to say, were Jack Howard, Pat and Sawnie.

With a crowd more of officers and soldiers off duty, they had been listening outside the tent. A murmur of admiration ran around the council.

Then General Wilson said:

"Where is the need of three running the gauntlet of the tomb, when the sacrifice of one will suffice? I will accept the first who offered himself."

"Nae—nae, none or all," cried Sawnie; "we've grinned in the face o' death a thousand times an' mair in company, an' we won't be parted the noo. It's all or none, gineril."

"Not so, my brave friends. I insist on going into Delhi alone," said Jack.

"Bedad, an' you don't, though," put in Pat this time; "for, be Saint Pathrick, if the gineril

don't give us lave to go wid yer honor, we de sarts, an' follows ye widout it."

"You shall all go," said the general; "I know the three of you, and am well versed with your doings in Turkey, Russia, Siberia and the Crimea. You seem to bear charmed lives, and so you are the very trio to undertake the present business; pray God you may succeed."

The council of war was then dismissed, and Jack, Pat and Sawnie received their instructions in private from General Wilson's lips, and a dispatch which he wrote out, signed and handed them.

This dispatch was to be delivered to the King of Delhi, and it demanded that all his women and child captives should be permitted to return to the British camp with the bearers thereof; promising that on that condition alone should his life and those of his two sons and grandson be spared, on the city's falling into our hands.

The three volunteers were to enter his capital with all the pomp and circumstance available.

"We are going into Delhi, as we think, to have our heads cut off," said Pat. "But we may save 'em, somehow or other, as we've oft saved 'em before, and we may come out of the place milliners, every man ov us?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEREIN PAT EXPLAINS HIMSELF, AND THE ROYAL PALACE IS REACHED.

"WHAT the deuce do you mean by our becoming milliners, old fellow?" said Jack, as all three were trotting their horses over the debatable land that intervened between the British camp and the city's walls; Sawnie carrying a long lance, with a white shirt streaming from its summit.

It had been feared that a pocket handkerchief would not have been large enough to attract attention, and hence the shirt, which had been washed and bleached white on purpose.

"Milliners?" retorted Pat; "an' sure, don't ye know what milliners are, yer honor?"

"I do, and as I told you once before, they are people who make ladies' caps and bonnets."

"Sure, an' there's another kind, thin. I mane the sort as is a-rowling in riches."

"You must mean millionaires, Pat. Millionaires, not milliners, my friend."

"Bedad, yer honor, I don't mean people that have a million hairs, for I shouldn't wonder if I'd as many for that matter. No. I'm speaking of folks that have millions of pounds."

"Why, Pat, where in the world are we to pick up millions of pounds in Delhi, eh?"

"Not in coin, perhaps, Masther Jack, but in big diamonds and rubies."

And for the first time Pat breathed to his comrades the secret, as he conceived it to be, of the wonderful idol that he had read of on the scrap of paper, now close upon two months ago.

"My poor fellow," replied Jack, "your heart is in the right place, but I fear that the idol isn't, or even that if it is in Delhi, we shall be allowed no chance of exploring for it. If we are lucky enough to get out of the place with our heads fixed upon our shoulders, it is as much as we have any reason to hope."

There was no time for a further discussion, for now they were close under the walls of Delhi and within a hundred yards of the famed Cashmere Gate.

It was of ponderous dimensions, and both o'ertopped and flanked by towers of enormous strength, which were armed with guns.

"I demand audience with the king," said Jack, boldly, as he rode with his companions right up to the gate, regardless of the many musket muzzles that by this time covered them.

All expected that they would be shot down, but no, the sanctity of the flag of truce was recognized even by these wretches, and the gates were thrown open to permit them to pass in.

Nevertheless, when they were closed and secured in their rear with a brazen crash, they felt as though it was the portals of their tombs that had been shut upon them.

They were informed that the king was at his castle of Heartsease, sunning himself in the graces of his three hundred and sixty-five beautiful slaves, for the old Blue Beard's orthodox number of wives was that of the days of the year.

But there were more hideous sights than fierce and revengeful black faces to be seen in the streets of Delhi; sights from which Jack and his two companions turned shudderingly away.

For here and there at certain street corners, and in the center of open spaces or squares, they could see naked white bodies hanging from gib-

bets, or nailed to crosses, and on sundry house-tops white heads stuck on spikes; their long hair, when they happened to be those of women, streaming in the wind, the face all gore-spotted, and the eyes horribly protruding, or else gone altogether, the prey of kites and vultures.

There were sights, however, that they could not turn from as from these.

They were ears, noses, toes, and fingers, and even women's breasts, that lay thickly in the dust of the streets, speaking in a silent yet heart-rending manner of the tortures and agonized sufferings that the white captives had had to undergo, even prior to martyrdom.

How their hearts burned within them as they gazed on all these things, proving by their presence that the reports they had heard in camp of all the horrors committed within the walls of Delhi, were only too well founded!

Jack had the greatest difficulty sometimes in restraining his companions' anger, especially when on one occasion a Sepoy band escorted them some way playing "The Rogues March," while two Sepoy havildars trailed a couple of British flags in the dust just in front of their horses.

At length, however, the palace gates were reached; and when these were opened to allow them to pass in and closed again behind them, the Sepoy and sowar rabble were on the outside.

Very different was the aspect of the warriors by whom they now found themselves surrounded, for they were the household troops of the king, and had never been in our service.

They were armed with lance, pistol, and poniard and cimeter, and were, magnificent specimens of barbarism.

A stately-looking personage, who seemed to be the captain of these men, conducted them within the vast marble portal of the castle of Heartsease, where he handed them over to the care of a much grander personage still, observing to them as he did so:

"More puppets for the Lord of the Universe to play with. What fools they are to walk thus with their eyes wide open into the tiger's den! There will be a rending of flesh and a crunching of bones ere long."

He spoke in the Nepaulese dialect, which is a corruption of the pure Hindostanee, thinking no doubt, that the British officers would not understand him.

Jack caught the general purport of his speech, and knew thereby that their deaths with torture were accepted by these men as a *fait accompli*.

The grandee motioned them to follow.

As they did so they could not help admiring his magnificent uniform, which was a tunic of padded crimson silk, and over it damascened chair-armor of the most beautiful workmanship, and which looked as though it were of solid gold.

The only comical thing in the warrior's appearance was a bright vermilion nose, and sky-blue ears, but this was the military fashion at the royal court of Oude.

"Sure, an' I believe the chap's a deserter from Astley's Theater. I saw a fellow dressed very like him when I went to the place during my last stay in London," said Pat.

The idea was so comical, and evidently uttered in such perfect good faith, that Jack could hardly forbear from laughing aloud, notwithstanding the peril of their situation.

And now they were led through corridor after corridor of marble.

At length, however, and at the termination of the ninth corridor, a heavy curtain of Persian silk was raised, and Jack and his companions found themselves in the presence of the king.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEREIN PAT AND NOT JACK OPENS THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KING.

THERE could be no doubt but that he was the king, for he was seated on a great ivory throne, and wore a crown of gold upon his head that was a complete blaze of rubies and sapphires.

Around him were grouped his courtiers and a guard of twenty-four warriors.

It was a gorgeous and picturesque group, but nothing, nevertheless, compared with that which posed and danced before them; for the king and his courtiers were being entertained by an Indian ballet.

Though they were black, they were all exquisitely lovely, these young dancers, for in beauty of form and features no maidens in the world can equal the Hindoo, and their skin is never coarse like that of the Europeans, but always smooth and soft.

The dress of the girls set off their peculiar beauty to the greatest advantage.

Around their bare bosoms were zones of diamonds, and their tiny waists were girt by golden belts bearing innumerable sweetly jangling bells, the said belts also serving to retain in place their light dress of muslin.

The tiny naked feet could not be heard to touch the white marble floor o'er which the dancers appeared literally to float.

"Sure, an' if we are to be killed I hope they'll do it while that's going on," said Pat.

"Hech, sirs, and one wadna feel the torture much with sic a vision as that to charm the e'e."

As for Jack, he said nothing.

But all at once the dance ceased, and the bright beings glided up in a glittering string to kiss the hand of the old king ere they retired from the royal presence.

The majority executed this act of homage and fealty with becoming grace and humility, but at length one exquisite little creature stepped on the sharp rim of a bell that had fallen from a companion's belt at the very foot of the throne, and it hurting her naked flesh, she uttered a little cry, and fell forward on the old king's feet.

Whether the monarch was afflicted with gout or bunions we cannot say, or perhaps it was only his dignity that was hurt.

Be that, however, as it may, he seized the little danseuse by her wreathed locks, and then, with the other hand, grasping a big guttapercha whip that had hitherto hung from the back of the ivory throne, he proceeded to lash her.

The poor girl endured three blows without letting a cry escape her, but when one fell right across her bosom, she screamed aloud.

That was enough for the gallant Pat.

When an Irishman sees lovely women in distress, he don't stop to reason with himself or others; however, and he ceases to be amenable to reason as well, and so Pat broke away from Sawnie and Jack, and crossing the marble floor of the king's presence-chamber like a mad and angry bull, bellowing out something or other as he went, he suddenly put one foot across the girl's body, and—oh, horror!—one fist in the King of Delhi's eye!

And he performed this operation with such strength and goodwill that, had it not had a strong back, he would have knocked the old king out of his throne.

"Hech, the puir fule, he has sealed our fate an' that of every European body in Delhi be that blow!" exclaimed Sawnie. "We'll all three be tortured an' executed within the hour, Misther Jack."

"And I'm afraid, Sawnie, that the poor girl in whose behalf he has interfered will get skinned or burnt alive instead of being merely beaten."

The poor girl had arisen to her feet directly the king had released his grasp upon her hair, and there she stood shivering with mingled pain and horror, until all the jewels that decorated her limbs seemed to shoot forth sparks and brilliant fire.

But exquisite as she looked even in her pain and terror, she was no longer the most interesting personage in the scene, for the shock-headed Hibernian had deprived her of that role.

He had just succeeded in giving his High Mightiness the King of Delhi a dab in the other eye, just for the sake of uniformity, perhaps, or to make them match in color, at the same time calling him "a black-hearted old schoundrel, and a disgrace to the sex," when the royal guardsmen, recovering from their surprise, sprang upon him, and made him captive, though not until he had sent a couple to grass with his fists, and butted a third plump into the royal old lap.

"Dog!—sug!—beast!—demon!" the royal voice was heard the next instant gasping, for the royal wind of Delhi had been knocked out by the guardsman whom Pat had butted against the regal corporation. "Where—does—he—come from? Ah, there are two more of them."

For Pat had not darkened the royal windows sufficiently, but that through the half-closed shutters they were still able to distinguish Jack and Sawnie.

Jack thought that if he wished to anticipate the order for their torture and execution, he had better speak out at once.

So crossing the slippery floor with martial bearing and head erect, he drew himself up to his full height when about a yard from the throne, and crossing his arms, said:

"Osman Oude Oolah, falsely calling yourself King of Delhi, I come under the sacred protection of a flag of truce, from Brigadier-general Sir Archdale Wilson, commanding her Britannic majesty's forces before Delhi, to warn you that

unless all your white captives, men, women and children, who may be yet alive, are suffered to return with us in all honor and safety to the British camp, the lives of yourself, your two sons, and your grandson, will be offered up in retributive sacrifice; and that we shall blow you all four from the muzzles of those monster guns that are now pounding the walls of your accursed city into heaps of rubbish."

The king heard this rather grandiloquent speech right through to the end, but it was rather rage and boundless indignation that kept him silent than fear.

But when Jack concluded, he said to his guards:

"Seize those two fools!"

And when this was done, he burst into a mocking laugh, and exclaimed, fiercely:

"What do you imagine, oh, Kaffirs, that my hundred thousand mighty warriors will be doing while you handful of red-coated Feringhees are trying to get through or over those walls, that I will not deny you are damaging, and which your bones are to help to rebuild? But bah! you are mad, all of you; and to attempt to reason with madness is worse than useless. To show you how much I care for your general's threats, you shall see one of your people executed before your eyes. I shall afterwards convince him by sending back your three heads to his tent in a boussa bag."

"You will not dare!" exclaimed our hero, striving to shake himself free of his foes by a mighty effort.

But three men to each arm were rather too many for him, and he failed to throw them off.

"No, bedad, ye won't dare, I reckon, afther the couple of black eyes I've given ye. And, be Jabers, spaking of that, what a shame it is that ye can't whiten nager's eyes with a blow, since the natest work possible is lost on their sootey mugs!" exclaimed Pat.

"Be quiet, do! Don't be sae free with yer speech, mon. Dinna ye see that the old carl is a glowering at us as though he understood every word that ye said?" quoth Sawnie.

"An' let him," retorted Pat. "Since he ain't going to let us have the free use ov our tongues for long, they shall let him know our opinion of him while they will wag."

"Silence!" roared the king at this instant, "and give that chattering fool a knock in the teeth with a pistol-butt if he won't be still without. By Brama and by Siva, it strikes us forcibly that his head would give us far less trouble were it off his shoulders."

Scarcely had these words quitted the king's lips when a dozen swords leaped from their scabbards and Pat's head might have been converted into a football in another instant, had not the monarch thrown up a hand and exclaimed, hastily:

"Stay; we have resolved to offer up all three unto our gods, and well ye wot that the sacrificial knife of the priest may alone shed the blood of the victim. Here, however, comes one whom ye may freely operate on."

CHAPTER XX.

INDIAN ATROCITIES—SIGHTS TO MAKE E'EN STRONG MEN WEEP.

As the king finished speaking there was dragged into the hall a white lady and a boy of about six years of age, a pretty little fellow with dark blue eyes and golden curls, a complexion as delicate as a lily.

He was nearly naked, and it was only the dead whiteness of the marble floor that showed he had any color in his soft, smooth skin at all.

His mother held him by the hand. She was herself a beautiful woman of not more than twenty-five, with her dress torn, and with a world of horror writ in her countenance.

"Now, Kaffirs," said the old king, his eyes lighting up with a most malevolent expression the while, "you shall see how I regard the threats of the Lord Sahib Wilson. Tapo Ramee, cut off that woman's ears, and lay them at my feet!"

Thereupon, the public executioner stepped forth from behind the king's throne, a hideous-looking official, clad from throat to heel in tights, like those worn by a stage sprite, only distinguished by broad black and flame-colored stripes.

Flame-colored were also his hands and face, and on his head he wore a skull-cap of gleaming copper, having a long horn rising behind either ear to a height of nearly a yard.

This grim-looking personage, carrying a sickle-shaped knife, in his right hand, all made way for, and presently he stood by his terrified victim's side.

She began to rend the air with her screams, while he stood grinning at her, a man evidently in love with his profession, and inclined to look upon it as a fine art.

Then, as he raised his knife, she struggled to get free from those who held her, but as vainly as Jack, Pat and Sawnie endeavored to rush to her assistance.

But all three were as powerless as was the poor lady in the hands of their captors.

And the next instant her ears were held in the left hand of the executioner as he took out of them the gold and turquoise rings that he considered his special perquisite.

How heartrending were her moans; but terrible as must have been her anguish, she ceased to feel it when the black Herod shouted out:

"Now for the boy! Hack off his limbs!"

The victim heard the words, but understood not the meaning, for he was trying to comfort his mother who, when the black hand closed on his arm, struggled hard to save him, but the boy was torn violently from her, and began to shriek in the agony of his apprehension.

The king and his courtiers broke forth into roars of laughter as they watched his struggles, and the poor mother's agonized despair as she sought to recover him.

"Oh!" she screamed, falling on her knees, "torture, slay, do what you will with me, but spare my child, my boy, my only pride and joy! you are hurting him!"

The last exclamation was wrung from her on perceiving how his flesh was reddening beneath the clutch of the black fingers that sank deep into it.

Picture her emotion, then, when suddenly a sword-blade swished through the air and he fell at her feet a corpse.

Happily she swooned away.

And why need we narrate them in detail since they are so awful that the mind revolts even from their contemplation?

"Thus do I regard the Sahib Wilson's threats," growled forth the old king, when his mandates had been thus ruthlessly carried out. "An account of what has just happened in your presence shall be forwarded to the Feringhee camp in the same bag that contains your head; for do not imagine I am going to sacrifice you in order that the deed may be hidden from the eyes of men. No—no; I shall glory in its publication."

"As the British will glory in their vengeance when they have you and yours beneath their heel. Methinks that I see you now, oh, king, blown from the mouth of one of our guns, and your hideous, devilish form coming down a horrid rain of blood and shattered fragments of flesh and gore. I speak as a prophet, for the hour is at hand—ay, it is very near indeed. Listen to that sound! 'tis the warning voice of those pieces of cannon, one of which is to be your executioner. Hark! there they speak forth again."

And Jack, as he concluded, pointed in the direction from whence, sure enough at that moment, came the roar of such heavy ordnance as the citizens of Delhi had never yet listened to, for even since Jack and his companions' departure, the heavy siege train under General Nicholson had come up, and the guns had at once taken up positions and opened fire on the city.

The ebony countenance of the foul old monarch grew of a dingier hue as he listened to the unwelcome sound, and then catching the gaze of Jack fixed threateningly upon him, he hastily and nervously clutched the tiger's tooth that was suspended around his neck by a golden chain, as a charm against the evil eye.

"Away with them!" he shouted, seeking to hide his evident discomposure by an extra dash of ferocity and hauteur. "Away with the three to the dungeons of the temple! Give them unto the priests as my gift, and tell them that I wish them to be offered up on the morrow so that the god may be propitiated to graciously defend our walls and give us the victory over our enemies."

"Bedad, ye ould fool, and do you imagine that a block ov wood, or stone, can help ye to bate us, even if 'tis cut out in the shape ov a man or a devil?" exclaimed Pat, with strong contempt in his tone.

As, however, the King of Delhi didn't understand Irish, the speech passed for naught.

And now not only were they held firm, but they were pushed onwards, and hurried as quickly as possible out of the royal presence by the application of lance-butts to their backs and shoulders, and pistol-stocks to their heads, a style of argument irresistible if not persuasive.

Jack Howard made no further attempt either to address or threaten the king, for he felt that it would be of no use after all the horrors that they had just been witnesses of.

So he submitted himself to be driven along just as his persecutors pleased, in dignified silence, though Pat and Sawnie both preferred easing their minds by giving them a bit of their opinion in the choicest Gaelic and Milesian that they could command.

They left the royal presence-chamber by a very different route than that whereby they had entered it, for they were driven and shoved around by the back of the king's throne, towards a vaulted and lofty archway behind which all seemed to be sepulchral gloom and horror.

The silver gallery that ran all around the domed hall, gleamed not in this region with the effulgent brightness that distinguished it elsewhere, but seemed to give forth the rainbow tints that may be seen on the surface of a foul and fetid pool.

And as they passed under it a hole or chasm yawned in the marble floor in front of them, with a number of slimy steps leading down into darkness.

An insufferable stench came upwards through the grim-looking orifice, and it was doubtless this stench that had tarnished and rainbow-tinted the silver gallery in its immediate proximity.

The smell was evidently that of mouldering and decaying human bodies.

A cold sweat of horror broke forth on the brows of the three doomed British officers as they were driven down the steps by the king's guards towards what they imagined would prove a hideous charnel-house.

But when they had got to the bottom and some way along a passage beyond, they entered a domed hall almost as spacious and high as the one they had just quitted above, only it was a subterranean one.

It was dimly illuminated by pale and ghastly fires, that burned at distances wide apart, on short, dumpy stone pedestals, like those where in England sun-dials may oft be seen.

These fires illumined, standing in the very center of the vast domed space, from whose roof lurid and blood-red stars, comets, and moons seemed to be glaring down upon them, a huge misshapen idol, whose face, however, they could not see.

Nor did they desire to behold it, for their attention was attracted and riveted by the fearful and heartrending spectacle that almost immediately faced them.

For there, directly in front of the idol, a huge cross of black wood sustained on it the delicate and beautiful form of a young English girl, suspended thereon by great nails that pierced her hands and feet.*

Her head had fallen over (with an expression of—oh, what terrible agony imprinted thereon!) on her left shoulder.

She had been dead but a few hours; the last victim, no doubt, that had been offered up to the idol.

Imagine the emotions of the three Britons at beholding such a sight—their hearts burning at the thought that they were unable to avenge the atrocious deed!

But they were debarred from even expressing their feelings to each other, for the next instant they were driven into three little cells at the other end of the subterranean temple, and the doors chained and bolted upon them.

CHAPTER XXI.

JACK'S SKELETON COMPANION, AND HOW IT HELPED HIM TO ESCAPE.

It would have been painful enough to have been imprisoned together; how much more so was it, then, to be cut off from all communication with each other during the few short hours that remained to them of life—for that they were very shortly to die not one of them could doubt.

In the door of each cell was inserted a small, grated orifice of stout iron bars, through which a view of the temple without could be tolerably obtained; the back of the idol being toward them, and directly facing them the crucified girl, her eyes staringly fixed on the hideous visage that confronted her, and her wealth of golden hair stirred now and then gently by some breeze that permeated the huge and lofty subterranean.

But suddenly footsteps were audible, soft, velvet footsteps, like those made by beasts of prey; and three men, or fiends, or ghosts, for it was hard to determine which they were, shone

out in the light of the pale, sickly fires that gleamed on the stone pedestals, and glared in one after the other at the caged and bound occupants of the narrow cells.

All three men were attired in flame-colored robes, and their hands, faces, hair, and naked feet were all alike, bright red, even their eyes seeming to partake of the same hue.

In his girdle of scarlet cord, each carried a scabbardless sword and knife, but even the blades of these weapons partook of the same horrible color.

As they looked in at the captives the mouths of these men expanded in a grin, and showed that their teeth too were red.

They spoke not, but they grinned again, frowncd, nodded their heads mysteriously, and then passed on out of sight.

Directly their footsteps ceased to be audible, Jack Howard set about exploring his prison chamber, and cogitating within himself a plan of escape therefrom.

It took him but a few seconds to shuffle around the walls, shiny and damp with foetid moisture.

But what was that awful rattle, that fall of something in a shower at his feet? that object seen gleaming, deathly white and upright for an instant, with something vaguely human in its aspects, and then lying in a phosphorescent heap on the ground before him?

He had felt his own body come in contact with it, and so he knew that 'twas he who had knocked it down; and now he stooped, filled with a vague curiosity to know what it was, but in stooping brought his head in contact with something sharp, which inflicted a wound upon his brow, and half stunned him.

Some minutes elapsed before he was himself again, and then he felt more anxiety to learn what had stricken him so hard than to discover what it was that lay upon the ground.

He shuffled towards it, and by rubbing his body against it, found that it was a big and sharp pointed hook set firmly in the wall; "and," thought he to himself, "whatever I knocked down was hanging on to, or transfixed by that hook."

Then he uttered a gasp almost of joy, for it occurred to him that by rubbing the lashings wherewith his captors had bound his arms behind his back against this hook, he could at last fray them asunder.

Ten minutes rubbing of his back against the hook, caused the cords to fall at his feet.

But before he set about freeing himself from his leg lashings, Jack put down his hands to discover what the phosphorescent heap was.

What he picked up, quickly to let fall again, was a mass of human bones.

He could tell that they were human because among them was a hand and a skull.

He hadn't any doubt in his own mind that the unhappy creature whom those bones once pertained to had been impaled alive on that steel hook, and had died in the most awful agony.

Such might be his fate, and that of his companions as well, did they not succeed in making their escape ere their executioners visited them.

Jack set to work at his leg lashings, and his hands being free, he cast them off.

Then he advanced to his dungeon door.

Could he but tear out the iron bars that constituted the grating of the little square orifice, he felt sure that he could thrust an arm out and down low enough to push back the bolt and undo the chain.

He would try, and he did try, and presently one came right off in his hand.

The dank and foetid air of the temple had evidently corroded the iron.

He was about to commence operations upon a second bar, when the three red men came forth from somewhere or other into the vast gloomy area of the subterranean temple.

They replenished the pale ghastly fires on the stone pedestals or altars, and then one of them went and fetched a crimson ladder and reared it against the great black cross.

The three next proceeded to take down the beautiful body of the young girl, and two of them bore her away out of sight, while the third performed some mystic rite or other.

Then he retired, and silence once more fell over the temple.

Jack began straining at the iron bars of his cell-door again.

In five minutes he had forced them.

He thrust out an arm and tried to reach down to the great bolt.

He not only succeeded in grasping it, but also in thrusting it back.

He then tried to get at the heavy chain. It was beyond his reach.

Was there anything that he could moun upon?

With a shudder, he had recourse to the human bones, skull and all, and when mounted on these he was able at last to get at the chain, and undoing it, he looped his handkerchief around it, and thereby gently and noiselessly let it down till it hung perpendicularly.

The door slowly rolled open.

He was free.

And now to release his companions.

He did not know in which cells Sawnie and Pat were confined.

He put his nose in at the grating of the door that was next his own, and whispered:

"Not a sound, not a murmur. I have freed myself, and am about to let you forth also."

Ha! what was that strange response?

It was most unmistakably a snore.

Jack undid and opened the door as quickly as he could, and went in.

He caught a glimpse of Pat's ruddy locks.

He was lying curled up in a ball.

"Gracious Heaven, the priests of the temple will be down upon us presently to learn the cause of the row!" groaned Jack.

He laid a hand gently but firmly over Pat's mouth, while he whispered a word in his ear.

Pat awoke at once then, and Jack set to work upon his bonds.

A minute or two and he was free, and then both went to liberate Sawnie.

His freedom was effected just as easily as Pat's had been, and they all glided into the obscurest corner of the temple to hold council as to what was next to be done.

Then it for the first time occurred to our hero that they were almost as far off from freedom as ever, for how were they to escape from the temple and afterwards out of the city!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE IDOL WITH THE DIAMOND EYES.

If the only way out of the temple was through the royal palace, then were their chances of ultimate escape indeed slight.

"If we go looking at all these difficulties in a lump their number will appal and overwhelm us. Whereas, if we tackle them singly one success may lead on to another," said Jack, in a whisper.

"All right, yer honor; fair an' aisy goes far in a day, 'tis said," responded Pat.

Sawnie said nothing, but he was resolved that he would struggle to the death ere he would be made prisoner again.

"We must take care that the priests of the temple do not suddenly pounce down upon us; or worse still, see us while we do not see them, and give an alarm that will bring hundreds to their help."

It was arranged that they should creep cautiously around the walls of the temple, and try to pounce upon the three priests instead of waiting until they were pounced on by them.

The altar fires were beginning to pale, and grow dim again, and this favored their plot.

"We will crouch down close behind one when it has burnt down a little dimmer," said Jack; "and as the priests are in the act of replenishing it, each will seize his man by the throat."

"An' throttle him before he can give as much as a gasp or a squeak," added Sawnie.

And this matter decided on, they glided along like three shadowy specters.

But suddenly Pat screamed out at the very top of his somewhat powerful voice:

"Och, be the blessed saints, an' is it dramming that I am ontirely? Och, yer honor, och, Sawnie, me, bhoy, there's the ugly auld idol that's to make milliners ov us."

"Pat, are you mad? Do you want to betray us to certain death? If so, there can be no doubt but that you've done it," hissed Jack, as he laid a hand on Pat's mouth.

"Och, Masther Jack, how could I howld it in when it comed on me so sudden?" cried the mad Irishman, freeing himself by an effort.

"Jest look at the dear good auld thing, wid his eyes a-glaring, an' his tongue a-lolling out, jest to make us milliners for life. Hip—hip—hoorror!"

Sawnie also threw himself on Pat now to keep his mouth shut. They could not help following the direction of Pat's enraptured gaze, and lo! they now looked upon the front and face of the huge idol, and beheld it gazing at them through two eyes that they knew to be monster diamonds.

Its tongue was lolling out of its mouth, too, and it was unmistakably a huge ruby.

Thus was Pat's excitement accounted for.

He had suddenly found himself face to face

*The Indians, in bitter mockery of our religion, often sacrificed our poor people, especially women and children then at Delhi, but, strange to say, in no other place.

with the idol that had been the object of his hopes, dreams, and aspirations.

Another minute brought with it the sound of hurrying feet, and they saw the three priests come forth from some dark alcove.

They had evidently heard the noise.

They grasped the hilts of their crimson-bladed swords, and Jack, Pat, and Sawnie made a sudden dash, and luckily got under the shadow of the idol before they were perceived.

"Hush!" said Jack, "all may yet go well, but we must be wary as well as bold."

"They're ganging straight towards the cells to see if we're still in them," said Sawnie.

"It's lucky that we fastened up all the doors again," retorted Jack.

"Faith, an' they're undoing thim, an' going in to see that we're all right," said Pat.

"Ha, I've an idea," said Jack. "They will each go inside a cell to see that its denizen has not tampered with his bonds. 'We'll let them find us there, eh?'"

"Bedad, an' ye manes a-stealing in behind 'em, and choking 'em half out of life, and finally whipping off their heads wid their own swords. Faith and begorra, yer honor, and I'm game for that same, anyway," said Pat.

"Hech, sir, and my mon won't want much settling with a sword after I've unclasped my digits on his foul throat," hissed Sawnie. "Gie me the word when to gang at thim."

"I will," responded Jack. "Keep your eyes on me."

They did so, and a minute later Jack breathlessly exclaimed:

"Now!"

The dash was made.

Each chose his own cell, and each found a priest of the temple there in the dark.

Sprang upon from behind, the wretches had no time or power to draw their swords or knives ere they were seized in a vise-like grip that almost caused their eyes to leap from their sockets, and hurled to the ground.

Then their heads were sliced from off their shoulders and cast on one side.

Jack, Pat, and Sawnie attired themselves in their flame-colored clothes, and secured around their own waists their swords and knives.

When they came out of the cells, they closed, bolted, and chained the doors behind them.

"If we can't find a means of reddening our hands and faces, we must one of blacking them," said Jack. "And now let us get somewhere out of this infernal place."

"Not until we've got the diamond eyes an' ruby tongue, though," said Pat. "Be Jabers, an' this sword will just gouge 'em out!"

"Comrades, let us think more of our lives than of paltry plunder and loot," remarked Jack.

"Ay, faith, yer honor, an' we'll think of both our lives, and how to make them comfortable when we've saved 'em. We'll never git such a chance of being milliners any more," retorted Pat.

Now as Sawnie seemed to be every whit as anxious to become a millionaire as did Pat, Jack had to give in.

They walked around to the front of the hideous monster, therefore, and while the radiance of the lustrous gems almost blinded them, Pat clambered on to Sawnie's broad shoulders, and scooped away at the diamond eyes with his sword-point.

Within a minute one of them had fallen at Jack's feet.

"Pocket it, yer honor, pocket it," said he, "an' look out for the other. Ah, there it comes!"

Down it did come, indeed, and the great ruby tongue quickly followed.

This Pat pocketed, declaring as he did so, "that the red was prettier nor white," and insisting that Sawnie should have the other eye, to accept which the honest Scot seemed nothing loth.

This second division of the spoil was hardly made when Jack, who had been prowling all around the monster deity, using the priests' ladder for the purpose, suddenly called out, as he peered over a huge hump on his back, at least fifteen feet above the ground:

"Why, here's a hole going down inside the figure, which is hollow, and there's a ladder leading down into a furnished room, and a light stands on a table there, and in the center of the floor is a trap-door with a ring bolt in it. I vote that we see where it does lead, for it strikes me that it will get us out of this place, lads."

"Faith, an' we'll thry, anyhow," said Pat.

And as Jack disappeared inside the idol's trunk, the Irishman and the Scot followed him up the ladder and over the hump.

Sawnie was the first to enter, and then Pat, and

as the latter did so he hauled up the red ladder after him and dropped it down inside.

"That's like blowing up a bridge in one's rear to cover a retreat," he said.

Pat suddenly beheld a vision that made him glide down the ladder, and fall into the arms of his comrades with a face as white as any ghost's.

"Why, what on earth is the matter, Pat?" asked Jack. "Have you seen a ghost?"

"Och, thunder-an'-ouns, not one, but three ov them, sur," gasped Pat. "May I niver spake more if there ain't the three haythin praists whose heads were cut off, a-running about the temple like mad, wid them as firmly fixed on their shoulders as iver they was. Oh, that same licks me altogether! It's horrid; it's awful!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE INTERIOR OF THE IDOL, AND WHERE THE TRAP-DOOR LED.

ON hearing this explanation of his fears from Pat, Jack said:

"These must be three other priests, attired just like those whom we have slain, who have foud their predecessors and are thus venting their sorrow and dismay. Of course, it's impossible that they should be ghosts."

"Hech, sir, an' of course not, for who ever heard of a black man's ghost?" echoed Sawnie.

Pat, however, stuck to the idea that they were the ghosts of the three priests whom they had slain.

"Sure, an' it's because we stole the eyes and the tongue out ov their idol's ugly phiz," ejaculated he; "an' now they'll haunt us all our lives long. Och, sure an' it's awful. Shall I crape out an' put the glittering things back in their places?"

"On no account, Pat," said Jack; "I assure you that 'tis men of flesh and blood that you have seen, and it is of the utmost importance that they should not see us in turn; no, nor hear us, either."

"Ye'd best not speak at a', but rather keep yer breath to cool your porridge," suggested Sawnie.

"What's that ye're a-saying to me? Is it an insult that ye manes to imply, ye haggis-eating, whiskey-drinking, back-rubbing Scotchman?" demanded O'Corker.

"Hist, ye empty-sounding drum, ye pitatie-chewing son of Willsomebodytreadonthetailof-mecoat," retorted McSulphur.

"Och, sure then tread on it; tread on it, an' ye dare; tread on it sure, instead o' talking!"

"Will you two be quiet?" expostulated Jack, getting between them, for well he knew that blows would ensue in another minute. "Is this a time to quarrel, when we are surrounded by a thousand dangers? when, perhaps, there are a hundred foes beneath that trap-door under our feet? Shake hands on the instant."

He was at once obeyed.

"No one can climb up the smooth marble back of the idol to look down at us through the hole in the hump without the ladder that you most thoughtfully drew up after you," said Jack to Pat; "so that now we are here we will just peep into those green boxes that lie about, and see what is inside them."

These boxes were five in number, and were arranged around the walls of the circular chamber.

"All right, yer honor; perhaps they may be full ov diamonds," ejaculated Pat.

He tried to take up the lamp as he spoke, but it was fixed to the table.

"Never mind," said Jack, "we can see," and he opened the lid of one of the boxes.

"Bravo!" said he, as he gazed upon what was within. "Just the very things that we want."

"What! diamonds, an' rubies, an' emeralds an' sapphires, and opals?" exclaimed Pat.

"No, man alive. Wigs of long red hair, and the pigments that they dye their skins red with," answered Jack.

"Pigs that they dye themselves red with. Is it the blood of the swate craters that yer honor means? Faix, if so, won't they kick up a row ere we get at it. But I see no pigs, Masther Jack?"

"Pigments, not pigs—colors, in other words," replied our hero. "Now, I'll do your faces and then you shall do mine. No, I'll do my own, for here's a little steel mirror. You can manage your own hands and feet, for we must off with our boots and stockings and go the whole hog or none. Wigs first, though, wigs first. Why, by Jove! the hair of each is a good yard long. We'll make fine Hindoo priests!"

And sure enough, when, five minutes later, by

aid of the paints, the wigs, and Jack's skill, their disguise was perfected.

"Now," said our hero, "I think we shall be able to pass muster with any of them."

"Ay, sure," responded Sawnie; "but I wonder muckle what's in the ither boxes."

"Ochone, Sawnie, that's well thought of; let us see," echoed Patrick O'Corker.

Pat burst open and threw back the lid of one of them, and lo! it was full to the brim with gold coins, precious stones, and rich jewelry.

"Fill yer pockets, lads, fill yer pockets," cried Pat.

It was impossible to resist the temptation.

"Now, let us get out of this as quickly as we can," said Jack, when they had all three filled their pockets.

"Nae, we'll jist glance into this one more first," said Sawnie; and inserting his dagger blade under the lid, he prised it open, threw it back, and lo! it was full of weapons, almost all of them British, and to Jack's great joy, some six-barrelled revolvers among the number.

"This is a far better prize in our present position than all the gems we have pocketed, for see, here are caps and cartridges by the score. Make room for them if you have to throw away diamonds, and let us load our weapons ere we go down into the vaults," said Jack.

This was soon done; but it is a noticeable fact that no diamonds were cast away.

Down into the pit they prepared to go, Pat and Sawnie straining away with all their strength to lift up the trap-door.

Presently up it came, disclosing a black and yawning gulf below, apparently bottomless.

Both Scot and Celt recoiled.

"Pooh!" said Jack, "I'll warrant you it won't be as bad as it looks. It must lead somewhere, and there must be a way down, that's very clear. Feel for the steps with your feet."

Pat did so at once, and soon kicked the rung of a ladder.

Down it he went, and Sawnie after him.

When they were at the bottom, Jack set about descending in turn, and when he had got down three rungs of the ladder he turned and put up his hand to close and secure the trap-door behind him.

Happening to glance upwards at the hole by which they had entered the idol, he saw a crimson face almost stopping up the orifice.

It was the face of one of the priests of the temple.

Jack pulled down the trap, and discovered a bolt whereby he could secure it from beneath.

"That will prevent our being followed by the same route for a little while, at all events," he muttered to himself, as he stood at the foot of the ladder beside his companions.

"Let us push on quickly and see if there is an outlet anywhere," he exclaimed.

They shuffled along the ground, for they were uncertain but that at any moment they might fall into a well, or totter over the edge of a subterranean abyss.

Presently they turned a corner and saw before them two thin streaks of light.

They marched straight towards them, and presently knocked against something hard.

They found that it was a door, and that the lights gleamed through two chinks therein.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HAIDEE'S FLIGHT NORTHWARD—THE HEADLESS LADY.

WHILE Jack and his companions thus discovered their progress to be barred, and that they were prisoners in the very bowels of the earth, their retreat back into the idol by this time doubtless cut off, Haidee was journeying northward alone, mounted on a good horse, armed, and ready to encounter every danger as long as she could at last gain her husband's side and share his captivity, his tortures and his doom.

She had told Lady Bulstrode nothing of her intention.

She was informed by letter, however—a letter that thanked her warmly for her hospitality and kindness, and avowed the writer's eternal gratitude.

And when Haidee had written it, and laid it where she was sure that Lady Bulstrode would find it, she hid all the money and valuables that she was possessed of upon her person, sent a servant to a neighboring livery-stable for a horse, declaring that she was going to have a couple of hours' canter upon the Maidoon, and mounting it the instant that it was brought, started off at a gallop for the north.

Haidee thought little or nothing of appropriating the horse.

Great and rich people in her fatherland seized upon a horse whenever they wanted one, little caring who it belonged to.

Haidee had not yet got Europeanized in this respect.

Her sole weapons were a tiny toy pistol, though deadly at fifty paces which she carried in her bosom, and her light riding-whip.

But love made her brave, and she had a sort of Oriental presentiment that Allah would guide her to her husband's side in safety.

Lady Bulstrode, a couple of hours later, came across Haidee's letter.

When she had read it she rushed with it down to the drawing-room, where her nephew was waiting for dinner, so that he might listen to her voice, and be charmed by her radiant beauty.

Directly he saw his aunt, he felt instinctively what had happened.

Scarcely had she got half way through Haidee's letter, than he exclaimed, as he sprang excitedly to his feet:

"I know—I see it all; she is rushing upon her destruction! There exists not the slightest chance that she will reach Delhi without being cut to pieces on the way. How can she love that jealous fool, her husband, with such devotedness?"

The speaker forgot that 'twas he who had first caused that unfounded jealousy to take root in the young husband's breast.

And now he felt that the biter was somehow bitten, for, though he had begun paying his somewhat obtrusive attentions to Haidee solely to spite Jack, their daily intercourse had taught him to love her with a passion as intense as it was hopeless.

"She must not be left to perish without an attempt being made to save her. My arm is all right now, and it is high time that I rejoined my regiment. Within an hour I will be on my road to Delhi, and within six I may have overtaken her, in life, I hope, but more probably to come across her body, stark and stiff, by the roadside."

"You forget, dear nephew, what perils you yourself would run in journeying up country alone."

"No, I do not, aunt. I don't believe I'm as brave as most men, as most soldiers, at least, but I think that I could fight with the ferocity of a tiger in the defense of that lovely and innocent young creature. Besides, if she gets slain in the wars, I shall be in reality her murderer."

"You her murderer? Good gracious me, what can you mean?"

"Never mind. Don't question me. I fear that I have acted the part of a scoundrel, that's all. Not that I intended to hurt her, though I essayed to strike another through her, forgetting that the blow would be sure to recoil on her innocent self. But what am I jabbering here for, when I should be acting?"

And Lieutenant Huntley tugged violently at the bell-rope.

It was answered almost instantly by a butler.

"Eagles, tell my syce to saddle my charger, and bring it around to the door immediately," he said.

"My dear nephew, you've forgotten all about dinner."

"All right, aunt. I'll eat as much as ever I can in the limited space of five minutes. And I say, aunt, just load both my sabretache and haversack with sandwiches, for when I do overtake Haidee, if she be happily still alive, she will be assuredly starving, since she will not dare to enter any native village to ask for food."

"Oh, dear—dear! if you do find her alive, induce her to come back to Calcutta."

"My dear aunt, depend upon it, no inducement on earth will keep her from her husband's side, now that she knows he is in danger and deadly peril. I know her nature, and a little of her past life as well."

Huntley belted on his sword, and looked to his pistols and cartridge-box.

In another five minutes he was ready, and in ten he was in the saddle and off.

His syce, or black groom, a personage little encumbered with clothing, since he was stark naked, save for a turban on his head and a snow-white commorbund around his waist, ran by his side, holding fast to a stirrup iron with one hand, for Huntley knew that the darkey would be useful as a trained hound to hit off the scent of Haidee's horse.

The fashionable part of Calcutta was soon traversed, and the Black Town gained.

Here the British officer was received with many a scowl and muttered curse; but our great

victories had overawed the native mind, and the destroyer has grown timid.

On this account dagger and sword-bilts were only grasped instead of drawn, and Lieutenant Huntley ran the gauntlet of the native quarter in safety.

Scarcely were they clear of the city when a fearful thunderstorm came on, but though Huntley was in a single minute wet to the skin, he only winced at the thought that the cold drops had drenched Haidee's beautiful body.

Lieutenant Huntley increased his pace until the syce could hardly keep up with him, in his eagerness to overtake her if possible ere it was too late.

Presently he had good reason to imagine that it was too late already.

For six miles further on his horse shied at something that lay by the roadside.

"Dead mem—sahib, sar," said the syce, when he had darted forward and inspected it.

"Here, hold my reins," said Huntley, hoarsely. And he sprang out of his saddle.

Hurrying to the side of the road, he sank on his knee and bent over the prostrate form, and at that instant there came a broad glare of sheet-lightning, and he saw by the pale, unearthly light an exquisite female form, clad in a dark blue cloth habit, such as Haidee usually wore; but oh, horror! head and hands were both lopped off and gone, God and her foul assassins alone knew where.

CHAPTER XXV.

TRAVERSING THE SUBTERRANEAN CITY—ITS PERILS.

WE left Jack, Pat and Sawnie in the subterranean way beneath the temple of the diamond-eyed god, obstructed by a huge and ponderous door.

And it was no puny obstacle, for it was evidently of great thickness and strength.

Worse still, all its fastenings were on the other side, and it would never do to attempt to blow them open, because on that other side was a well-lighted, subterranean street, with people passing to and fro.

"Sure, an' it's very hard being a milliner, and then having to die the death of an old rat," growled Pat, "whin we've the manes of cutting such a shine at home in ould Oireland, too."

"Hech, mon, an' it's unco hard, as I maune'en agree," responded Sawnie. "Why, we've the manes of outshining all the rich people."

"Och, blessed Saint Pathrick, I vow that I'll deck thy every shrine in the three kingdoms wid a thousand candles if you'll help us out of this place," whined Pat.

"I vow that I'll present to our gracious queen a regiment of cavalry a thousand strong, all ready equipped, armed, and mounted, if we get back to England alive," said Sawnie.

"Come—come—come, let us think more of what's to be done at present than of what we will do when we get home to England," broke in Jack. "Remember that Providence helps him the most who puts his own shoulder to the wheel, and that we are not doing at the present."

"In default of a wheel let us clap 'em agin the door, yer honor," suggested Pat.

They did so, but it wouldn't budge an inch. Then they essayed to get the points of their swords through the interstices that admitted the light, but they were too narrow.

In vain they searched for another outlet from their prison house.

Not one was to be found.

They began to despair, and no wonder, for they might either be left there to starve, or, the priesthood of the temple, assisted by armed soldiers and fanatics, might descend through the trap door and massacre them.

No sooner had they made up their minds that by no earthly possibility could they effect their escape from the horrid subterranean, than, on again peering through the chinks of the great door, they saw a procession coming along the street without, directly toward it.

It was a procession of priests, all attired exactly like themselves; and while six of them supported and bore along a baby-idol, having three heads growing triangular-wise out of its shoulders, the rest carried torches, flags, or heads, stuck on lance points. White heads, of course.

"They are coming through," whispered Jack to his companions; "they are making their way to the temple by this route. Let us shrink as far back as we can and try to escape their notice."

Jack's advice was followed instantaneously.

A minute later the ponderous door was thrown

open, a blaze of ruddy light filled the subterranean, and at a signal from Jack, he and his friends, before they were perceived threw themselves among the processionists.

Joined but to quit them an instant later, however, and to make their way through the now wide open door into the street.

To their great relief and joy they were taken no notice of by those who still thronged it, and who doubtless thought that they were three of the priests come back.

This showed that their get up was perfect, and gave them considerable comfort.

The three disguised hussars got through that street and one or two others beyond, without coming into hostile collision with a quarrelsome sepoy.

On the contrary, all cringingly made way for them to pass along, the more zealous devotees bowing their foreheads to the earth.

But while they were yet wondering where these underground thoroughfares would finally conduct them, they heard a great noise like the beating of brazen gongs, coming from far in their rear.

Then a shout, or rather wail, reached their ears from the same direction.

"The loss of the idol's eyes and tongue has been discovered," whispered Jack to his companions. "That is the tocsin of alarm. All Delhi will be ablaze with the news within an hour."

"Hech, sirs, an' I think we'd better try to make ourselves scarce before then," cried Sawnie.

"An' these underground strates. I wish we could see the ind of thim," groaned Pat.

This wish was by no means confined to himself.

All three wanted to see the end of them.

By this time the population of the subterranean place seemed to have become almost entirely military.

Through every open door the red uniforms of the sepoy soldiery could be seen, and sepoy sentinels now peered up and down here and there, musket on shoulder, and bayonet fixed.

Yet still the same respect and servility was shown to the three sham priests.

The sentinels drew themselves up and presented arms to them one after another.

At last, to the great relief of all three, they came to some upward tending steps.

They ascended them.

Little prepared were they for the sight that would greet them at its summit when they reached it.

For, five minutes later, they found themselves on the ramparts of a tower, one of the twenty-four that arose above the city's walls, and beyond and before them, bathed by the white moonlight, lay the British lines.

Scarcely could the dauntless trio restrain the cheer that arose to their lips.

But dangers and perils still girt them on every side.

For they were on the top of a tower that three sepoy sentries were pacing at different parts.

And now to make matters still more complicated, every bell in Delhi began to clash forth the tocsin of alarm.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOPE AND DESPAIR — ARE THEY MEN OR GHOSTS? — A CRITICAL MOMENT.

PAT and Sawnie were appalled at the obstacles that lay in the way of their reaching the British camp.

But the sound of the alarm bell gave Jack an idea, and it suddenly struck him that their deliverance might yet be accomplished.

He communicated his ideas to Pat and Sawnie.

They had not as yet shown their heads more than an inch or two above the top of the staircase that led on to the ramparts; but now they all rushed forward together, and accosting the nearest sentry, Jack exclaimed reproachfully and wrathfully in Hindostanee:

"Why didn't you shoot him—why didn't you shoot him ere he leaped the parapet?"

"Shoot him? Leaped the parapet?" stammered the bewildered sentry.

"Yes," exclaimed the sham priest, without giving the sepoy time to think. "An accursed English. But stay, he is not yet clear away; he must be still struggling in the moat. Give me your musket."

The sentry did so without the slightest suspicion; and Jack, rushing to the parapet, fired it into the deep gloom below, making up his mind meanwhile what he should do next.

"Ha, I've missed him!" exclaimed he, the next instant, rushing back; "I've missed him!"

But the other two sentries had by this time reached the parapet, and were shouting, and very naturally:

"Where is he—where is he?"

For not a sign of a human being could they see.

This wasn't very wonderful, considering that no human being was there.

Then all the sepoys rushed up from the guard-rooms below.

"We do not see him!"

"But I do," persisted Jack, in his character of priest of the temple. "There he is under shadow of the tower, and hiding under the bank. We must sally forth and take him. I offer to whoever seizes him first, a hundred golden mohurs."

This was enough.

All felt sure that the priest really saw the man, and privates and officers alike were off in a moment.

Down they rushed from the tower ramparts at headlong speed.

Of course while they were thus engaged, Jack, Pat and Sawnie extricated themselves from the crowd quickly.

They had not got far, however, when they were perceived, and a great cry went up from the sepoys.

Afraid that they would fire upon them, and he and his friends were by no means yet out of range, Jack halted, drew himself up, faced the sepoys, and then wheeling around again, pointed to where, about a couple of hundred yards ahead of where he stood, there was a little bent and stunted bush, whose outline was not unlike that of a crouching man.

The bait took.

The sepoys thought that it really was the fugitive, and they cheered their three mock priests when they saw them draw their swords, and apparently cut the English spy to pieces.

But this accomplished, they naturally expected that the three priests would return.

Not a bit of it.

To their intense surprise they shuffled still on towards the British camp.

Now for the first time they began to think they had been deceived.

They shouted to the priests to return.

Their suspicions were so aroused that they commenced to fire at them.

But by this time our three friends were well out of range of their muskets.

And resolved were they all to take precious good care to keep so.

But having no doubt now but that they were Feringhees, who had got away from them by a most clever ruse, the sepoys, instead of pursuing them, which they all felt would be useless (since there are no runners like the English,) rushed up on to the parapets of the tower again, and brought a couple of twelve pounder guns to, as they thought, bear upon them.

They were trained remarkably well, since the first ball passed close over the fugitives' heads, and the second between Jack's and Sawnie's.

At last, to their intense satisfaction, the ugly messengers began to fall short, and a few minutes later a canny Scotch voice cried out:

"Wha the diel gangs there? Speak, or I fire!"

It was very natural that he should bring the devil's name into his query, for he must certainly have fancied that he was challenging three of his ugliest imps.

Sawnie's answer, however, set him quite at his rest.

"It's lucky for ye that I hadna fired," he remarked, as he shouldered arms and permitted Jack and his companions to pass into camp.

Meanwhile Jack and his companions pushed on to the tent of the general.

Notwithstanding the lateness of the hour they found him up and writing dispatches.

He eagerly pressed them to inform him of the result of their mission to the king.

When they had done so he ground his teeth together, and bringing his clenched fist down upon the rough deal table with a crash, swore that when the British troops were inside the gates of Delhi, he would spare no man, for the entire race were fiends in heart.

When the general dismissed them they returned to their own quarters, for they needed rest.

To reach the cavalry cantonments that had to traverse almost the entire British camp.

The camp was buried in profound repose.

Only the sentries were awake and stirring.

But presently, Pat caught sight of something that to him must have looked more uncanny still, for he gripped hold of Jack's arms, and exclaimed in a whisper:

"Bedad, yer honor, and the praists as we killed are afther us still, be the howly poker!"

Of course, at this excited remark, Jack and Sawnie glanced around in turn, and there, sure enough, at a distance of about a couple of hundred yards in their rear, three men, painted and attired exactly like themselves, were following in their tracks.

"We must encounter them," said Jack. "We must learn who and what they are."

But no sooner had the words escaped his lips than the three spectral priests seemed to sink into the earth.

Jack Howard and his two companions, unable to find any traces of the mysterious beings, sought their quarters.

The siege continued, and worn out, the three friends had retired to their couches, seeking that rest of which they stood so much in need.

For a long time they turned on their hard couches and wooed slumber in vain.

Thoughts of his brave old father's misfortunes and his young wife's infidelity kept Jack awake, and the excitement caused by the acquisition of great and unexpected riches had the same effect upon Sawnie and Pat.

Each lay awake thinking what he should do with his almost fabulous wealth—the loot of the Indian temple—and while Sawnie decided he should like to build a town, and have nothing thereafter to do save to go about and collect his rents, Pat was reflecting that he'd delight to purchase Jack a dukedom, and then serve him faithfully all his life in some manner or other.

It was pleasant even to be lying on all those lustrous gems—though, to be sure, they were every whit as hard and uncomfortable as pebbles.

But then it was such a sweet evidence of their existence to feel them grating into their backs, and seemingly trying to force their way in between their ribs, so that the very pain they caused was a pleasure, as it were.

And all the while the great full Indian moon, effulgent and vast as Achilles' silver shield, shone into the tent with a pale white light that caused the very smallest object therein to be plainly perceptible.

But bodily exhaustion will generally overpower mental activity in the end, and so it turned out in the present case.

For when the metal ghurries boomed out the fourth hour of the morning, Jack and his companions were sound asleep.

They gave token of their being so by their snoring.

Now, snoring is not generally pleasant music to those who have to listen to it, but there were three human beings who, in the present instance, heard the sounds with rapture.

They were tall, athletic men, clad in the gorgeous oriental uniforms of our faithful allies, the Sikhs.

Their long flowing whiskers were brought up and tied in a knot above the tops of their twisted red turbans, but their black faces looked as though they were splashed with blood here and there, and their feet and hands the same.

They were armed to the teeth, and their looks were as cruel and savage as those of hyenas.

For more than an hour they had been prowling about the tent wherein our three friends lay.

They threw themselves down on their stomachs and wriggled themselves into the tent under the flap.

Like snakes were their movements, and sharper than a serpent's fangs were the stings that they now carried between their tightly-clenched white teeth, for they were long, double-edged daggers with poisoned blades.

Each mentally selected his victim, approached him noiselessly, and bent over him. Dagger now shifted from mouth to grasp.

Three light hands then felt softly for the exact position of three beating hearts, and then the blades were raised on high.

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